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New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Green

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in today's meeting: Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati, Coordinator of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigènes et des Ménages Vulnérables; and Abbé Donatien Nshole, Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods (S/2017/507), I wish to encourage all participants, members and non-members of the Council alike, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are encouraged to limit initial remarks to 15 minutes or less.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: The picture I am holding shows Mwasi Kallunga and her seven children, including her 18-month-old baby, Shabani. Members of the Council all have the picture in front of them. They can see that little Shabani has the distended belly of many malnourished children. I met them last Tuesday in Katanika camp, in Kalemie, in the stunning and rich landscape surrounding Lake Tanganyika in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mwasi's husband and two of her nine children were killed when her village, 50 kilometres away, was attacked and burnt down by militiamen in January. They fled, walked for two straight days and now live in squalid conditions under a plastic sheet in a tiny so-called shelter in a congested, cramped, unsanitary, hilly camp at constant risk of fire and flood. Her children can no longer go to school. Her entire family — traumatized, sobbing and destitute — are too terrified to contemplate returning home.

Mwasi and her children are among the 4.5 million people displaced right now in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Humanitarian needs caused by internal conflict have doubled over the past year. Thirteen million people need humanitarian assistance. More than 4.6 million children are acutely malnourished, including 2.2 million suffering severe acute malnutrition. We are seeing mushrooming epidemics including the worst outbreak of cholera in 15 years.

There is also an epidemic of sexual violence, most of it unreported and unaddressed, and much of it against children. I am glad that Jeanine Bandu Bahati has joined us as a briefer and to see Julienne Lusenge, a strong and courageous defender of women's rights and an activist against sexual violence, in the Chamber among the guests. Almost 746,000 Congolese have fled to neighbouring countries, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself hosts more than 540,000 refugees. Without a halt to the violence and a successful political transition, these numbers will all increase.

What Minister Sigrid Kaag of the Kingdom of the Netherlands — with whom I travelled — and I saw last week requires our urgent action. There is despair, but there is also hope. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are resilient and resourceful. I am very impressed by the selfless solidarity of many Congolese families. They have so little, yet they welcome their brothers and sisters from within and outside the country into their homes when those people are displaced by violence.

Without humanitarian assistance, things would be much worse. In 2017, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners reached more than 4.2 million people with life-saving protection and aid. This year, we aim to reach 10.5 million. To scale up the response, we have reinforced our leadership, strengthened our field presence and stepped up our advocacy. Humanitarian agencies continue to deliver despite persistent insecurity and bureaucratic impediments. There have been kidnappings and hijackings of aid workers in recent weeks in Tanganyika.

I had constructive discussions with the authorities on tackling these challenges and on how the Government can fulfil its responsibility for the provision of services and protection to the affected population, and on what they can do to facilitate humanitarian access through

the quicker issuance of visas and lower tariffs, fees and faster customs clearance for aid supplies. Minister Kaag and I also witnessed the signing of a cooperation agreement in Tanganyika between the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and the provincial Governor to reduce local taxes and fees for humanitarian assistance. The Government in Kinshasa told us that it would support similar agreements in other provinces.

I also want to emphasize the importance of the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is creating space for humanitarian delivery and protecting civilians. Things would unquestionably be much worse without the Mission.

Underfunding is the single largest impediment to the humanitarian response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This year, our appeal requires $1.7 billion — nearly four times what we secured last year. The Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union and the United Nations will, on 13 April, co-host in Geneva the first-ever high-level humanitarian conference on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The goal is to secure immediate and substantial financial contributions and to launch a multi-year campaign in support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I ask Council members today to ensure that the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is on the agenda of their Governments and to encourage high-level participation and pledges on 13 April.

We also need solutions to address the root causes of the worsening crisis, including by making progress on the political front and fair elections. We need the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours to behave responsibly as well. While the violence persists, all parties must take steps to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is possible. Over the 15 years since I first visited the country, infrastructure in many major cities has improved, access to education has increased, child mortality rates have fallen and immunization rates have increased. We need to strengthen our support to the Congolese people.

For Mwasi, the local Government and humanitarian agencies provide aid for her survival. Her new neighbours help with food for the children when they can. I asked her about her hopes for the future. She wants to be resettled, given a small plot of land to farm, and get her children back into school. It is not much to ask for, is it?

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati.

Ms. Bandu Bahati (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Netherlands for inviting me to this very important meeting on the political and humanitarian situation of women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because the voice of rural women is not often listened to.

I am a rural woman and the coordinator of the local women's non-governmental organization, Encadrement des Femmes Indigenes et des Ménages Vulnérables (EFIM), based in Goma, North Kivu province, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today I speak as a rural woman, a peasant woman, a grass-roots woman, a displaced woman, a woman affected by conflict and especially armed conflict.

My organization EFIM engages in the promotion of peace, gender equality and development; in the prevention of armed and community conflicts; and in the protection of women and girl victims of violence. Our vision is to strengthen community mechanisms that protect children and women and promote human rights, focusing on peaceful coexistence among communities, the promotion of peace and the sustainable development of my province. This morning, there are three issues I would like to raise with the Council: the security and humanitarian situation of women; the deterioration of the socioeconomic situation of women and girls; and the political participation of women.

First, the security and humanitarian situation of women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is increasingly deteriorating. It is tragic, catastrophic and chaotic. The majority of those affected — especially those living in rural areas where we work — are traumatized and live without hope for the future. The situation has been growing worse every year for more than two decades.

There are myriad kinds of violations among the salient problems negatively affecting and weakening populations, and which are particularly experienced by women and girls in Democratic Republic of the

Congo, especially in the east. These include massacres, bloodshed, murders and killings, temporary and permanent displacement, rape and sexual exploitation, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking, houses burned to the ground, activism, the proliferation of local and foreign armed groups, the looting of natural resources, in particular from the mining and agricultural sectors from which they could benefit, restrictions to rural activities, insufficient incentives to facilitate the participation and schooling of women and girls, the possession of illicit weapons by several people and humanitarian disaster. Such violations have lead to increased poverty, unemployment, chronic vulnerability, rural exodus, psychological trauma, weapons proliferation, and so on. It is a time bomb that will result in the extermination of women and girls and of the entire population if no effective grassroots measures are taken to prevent, protect and support women and girls.

By way of example, last month, 54-year-old Ms. Maombi, displaced and very vulnerable, with nine children in her charge, was assaulted and shot by armed men when she went to her field to reap crops. Her daughter, who was under 18, was with her. She was abducted, raped and returned a few days later. Another woman, Dorothée, who witnessed the attack, stated:

> "I was in my field. Attackers came and looted goods, burned houses and killed women and men in my presence. They kidnapped four children — two boys and two girls. I am now taking care of a baby left behind".

It should be noted that international aid workers in our areas of intervention are also the victims of attack.

Secondly, the deterioration of the socioeconomic situation of women and girls is also one of the major consequences of the humanitarian crisis that stems from myriad chronic insecurity-related tensions. I am referring here to North Kivu, but I should point out that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a whole, is affected and almost engulfed by the scourge. With less than a dollar a day, it is almost impossible to live in other areas. It is an intolerable situation for women and girls. What is worse is that they spend entire days with nothing to eat. Such extreme poverty deprives them, men and boys, of prospects and opportunities, which leads some young people to join armed groups and perpetrate other abuses. I know a widow who, before the war, would sell her goods in several markets. She was well-off , but due to the insecurity, she was robbed and became very poor and vulnerable. She can no longer feed her children or take care of her family. That is just one example among many.

Finally, the level of women's political participation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains low for several reasons. First, the new electoral law is not conductive to the participation of women and girls. Secondly, few political parties are created by women. Thirdly, very few women are appointed to leadership positions in decision-making entities and women's organizations, in particular at the local level. With regard to North Kivu, there are no women in leadership positions in any of the six territories and three cities. Despite all current and past efforts, women's voices are silenced. That, in a few words, describes the ordeal women and girls face in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Notwithstanding the issues listed above, I assure the Council that we have brave, intelligent, capable and competent women. They simply require the Council's support and assistance in order to show what they can do and produce. That is why we ask the international community to support those women, as well as young girls and boys without jobs, doomed to a life of unemployment.

In conclusion, on behalf of my organization, Encadrement des Femmes Indigènes et des Ménages Vulnérables, and of the women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we recommend that the Security Council, the United Nations and its Member States quickly assess security, protection, socioeconomic and political strategies that would help the women, girls and entire population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; efficiently redefine indicators that can lead to positive change; act promptly and positively to combat impunity; launch an investigation to punish those guilty of the revolting acts being perpetrated throughout my country; protect women so that they can live and work in a safe environment and provide support and assistance to women and women's organizations at the grassroots level that would yield good results that improve their humanitarian, sociopolitical and economic situation.

I thank the Council once again for the honour to speak as a rural woman who endures the ordeals I have described. The women of the Democratic Republic of the Congo want to be taken into consideration, protected, brought to safety and supported. They want

to live with dignity and in decent conditions, with the hope of a better tomorrow. They expect the Council to respond quickly to their cries for help.

The President: I thank Ms. Bandu Bahati for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Nshole.

Mr. Nshole (*spoke in French*): The humanitarian tragedy taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is deteriorating to such a degree that its people wonder if the situation is even being addressed by the international community and by the United Nations. I will provide a brief summary of the humanitarian and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, its root causes and the expectations of the Congolese people.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is marked by a surge in violence in Ituri province and a deterioration in North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, Tanganyika and Kasaï. Since 17 December 2017, the situation in Ituri has been marked by increased violence that quickly spread to several areas and targeted the Hema community. The identity and motivations of the attackers are not known. It is certainly not an inter-ethnic conflict, as we sometimes hear in the media. More than 100 people have been killed and more than 2,000 houses and huts have been burned. Public infrastructure has not been spared; some 100 schools and 5 hospitals, not to mention the Catholic parish of Lita, have been ransacked. Approximately 338,000 displaced people have been registered.

The risk of an outbreak of epidemics due to insufficient sanitary infrastructure is to be feared, especially with the return of rain to the area. The humanitarian needs are enormous and, to date, the response capacity of humanitarian actors has been limited, inter alia, by the difficulties faced by humanitarian workers in reaching the areas of violence. In Kasai, approximately 1.4 million people, more than half of whom are children, have been forced by the Kamwina Nsapu militias to flee their villages and to wander the roads. Many families who have decided to return home following the massacres have been traumatized by the sight of their pillaged villages, destroyed houses and ravaged fields, with nothing left to eat.

In Tanganyika, the humanitarian situation continues to be dominated by the massive displacement of people following the intercommunal conflict between the Twa pygmies and the Bantus in the Manono and Kabalo territories. The number of displaced people in that part of the country is approximately 200,000. That violence has also affected livelihoods. New waves of internally displaced persons estimated at 105 displaced households, or 525 people, have reached Kalemie since the beginning of February.

The security context in North Kivu has been dominated by repeated attacks by elements suspected to be armed groups of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has led to the deaths of civilians in the Beni territory. Those repeated incursions of armed men have caused serious problems for the protection of civilians.

In South Kivu, the security situation remains very volatile and humanitarian access is precarious owing primarily to the activities of armed groups and militias, including Raia Mutomboki, and clashes with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. Several displaced people have fled to the Shabunda territory since February in search of security.

In the former Equateur province, the presence of Central African refugees in the north-east of the province continues to weigh on the host communities, exacerbating the precarious situation of the local populations. Four camps, set up in North Ubangi and South Ubangi provinces by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, provide shelter to more than 100,000 Central African refugees.

Today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there are 4.49 million internally displaced persons, according to statistics published by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in late December 2017. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the African country with the most internally displaced persons, more than 60 per cent of whom are children and 55 per cent of whom reside in just three provinces — 26 per cent in North Kivu, 15 per cent in South Kivu, and 14 per cent in Tanganyika. However, as of 31 December 2017, there were 623,059 Congolese refugees in the neighbouring countries of Angola, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia.

The causes of that tragedy are essentially the unstable and precarious security situation due to the incursions of suspected ADF; the activities of armed groups; interethnic clashes, in particular among the Twa and Bantu communities; and the manipulation

of certain negative forces that are interested in the destabilizing our beloved country, as is the case in Ituri. Furthermore, the sociopolitical and electoral crisis that arose from the failure to hold presidential and legislative elections in accordance with the time frame set out in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the New Year agreement is creating discontent and a vacuum of State authority in certain areas of the country, owing to the lack of legitimacy of the main institutions.

With regard to the expectations of the Congolese people, in the light of the foregoing and in order to prevent the tragic humanitarian situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from becoming worse, it is essential for the United Nations to become further involved and urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hold proper elections. The Congolese bishops are convinced that only credible, transparent and peaceful elections can give the Congolese people legitimate leaders who are capable of addressing the multifaceted crisis that is ravaging the country. Calls by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the full implementation of the provisions of the New Year's agreement, which is a prerequisite for the holding of smooth elections, and compliance with the key dates of the electoral calendar should be the priorities of the day. Any complacency on those issues would be a time bomb, since elections that bring us back to square one would be a waste that the international community must avoid.

The mandate of MONUSCO should be strengthened to provide the Mission with the necessary legal means and equipment to protect civilians, vulnerable people and their property in areas where there are attacks and recurrent violence. Populations that are victims of insecurity and have been forced to flee their land urgentlu need humanitarian assistance. It is also essential to establish an economic development plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the elections.

The President: I thank Mr. Nshole for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, as well as Ms. Bandu Bahati and Abbé Nshole, for their briefings, which were as poignant as they were enlightening.

I would like to begin by commending the action of the countries of the region, which have demonstrated solidarity commensurate to the challenge posed and bear the primary burden of welcoming Congolese refugees. I also wish to pay tribute to the role of the Congolese themselves, who provide relief and support on a daily basis to the internally displaced persons and refugees arriving in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. More than 11 million people, mostly women and children, are now in forced displacement in the Great Lakes region .

I will not cover the terrible and detailed findings presented by the briefers, which represent a call to action. The question we must answer is: How can we respond and contribute to resolving that crisis?

First, we need to provide immediate financial support. The humanitarian crisis facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for renewed commitment on the part of the partners in order to address it. The donor conference to be held in April in Geneva will, I hope, be an opportunity to provide a resolute response commensurate with the needs of those affected by the crisis.

Secondly, we must also tackle the root causes of the current crisis. In the Kasais, a conflict between a traditional chief and the authorities, which was at first limited, has degenerated and triggered a wide-ranging crisis. In other parts of the country — in Tanganyika, Ituri and the Kivus — local conflicts aggravate or relaunch tragic humanitarian crises. In all such situations of intercommunal conflicts and activities of armed groups, the political factor plays a crucial role and contributes to fuelling tensions that are often linked to the availability of resources. The prospect of presidential, as well as legislative and provincial, elections will make local competition stronger and cause new tensions.

The Congolese Government, which has the primary responsibility for organizing elections, must take the necessary measures to ensure that the conditions for free, open and peaceful elections are in place, starting with the full implementation of the de-escalation measures provided for by the New Year's agreement. It will also be the responsibility of each candidate to ensure that their supporters behave respectfully in the political debate and exercise restraint. These measures

are essential to preventing new clashes and population displacements. They are in line with the objectives of national reconciliation, tolerance and democratization, which are part of the commitments undertaken by the Congolese authorities under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

More generally, it is early action through dialogue and mediation missions that will prevent the spiral that has led to the current humanitarian crisis. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has an essential role to play here. The Mission's integrated approach to protecting civilians is designed to address that issue. If properly implemented, the approach can even become a peacekeeping model. A whole-of-mission effort is necessary to prevent conflicts and to be proactive so as to prevent tensions from escalating. The Mission's good offices, supported by a tight community-alert network that enables early identification of potential conflicts, will be particularly crucial this year. France hopes that that aspect of MONUSCO's mandate will be strengthened in the mandate that we adopt by the end of the month.

The two priority missions of MONUSCO — the protection of civilians and election preparation — are inextricably linked and mutually reinforcing. That is why MONUSCO must have access to all necessary means to accomplish its mission. But we must be realistic. MONUSCO cannot do everything alone. Much will depend on how the elections are organized. A peaceful electoral climate, where everyone has confidence in the process and each candidate enjoys free expression, will contribute even more to pacification than anything MONUSCO could do.

I also call on the countries of the region to implement, without delay, the commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Results must quickly demonstrate those commitments, which were renewed collectively last October.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): The deteriorating political, security and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is indeed a matter of serious concern. The continued instability in the country has displaced many and caused a major humanitarian crisis that requires serious attention. We thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock, Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati and Abbé Donatien Nshole, Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, for their briefings on the latest situation, following the visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last week by the Dutch Minister and Under-Secretary-General Lowcock.

The current humanitarian emergency in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be seen in isolation from the political and security situation in the country. We believe that the problem requires a long-term and sustainable solution, as stressed by the French representative. The current humanitarian situation is worrying because of the very large affected population, which has reached a record high. We strongly support the call for mobilizing more resources to save lives, particularly vulnerable children and women in the severely affected areas of the country.

We appreciate the efforts of humanitarian actors on the ground who are supporting education, water and sanitation as well as agricultural projects to meet the needs of the displaced people. We are hopeful that the humanitarian donor conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to be co-hosted by the European Commission, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United Arab Emirates next month in Geneva, will help raise the estimated $1.7 billion required to address emergency needs in the country, including for the 4.5 million internally displaced people.

It will be very difficult to resolve the humanitarian crisis and the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the gravity of which has been so ably and passionately described by Ms. Bandu Bahati — without addressing the country's political and security problems. The continued instability in the eastern, southeastern and central parts of Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to displace huge numbers of people.

The implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement is absolutely imperative to address the political impasse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a consensual and inclusive manner and to ensure the organization of a peaceful, free, fair and credible election. In that connection, we note the measures taken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the announcement of the electoral calendar. However, we believe more needs to be done in terms of confidence-building measures The fairness and credibility of the election is a very

serious matter, as Abbé Nshole stressed. Of course, the Democratic Republic of the Congo also faces armed groups that are not known for being responsible.

The initiatives of countries of the region and the efforts of the African Union to support the momentum in preparations for the election deserve the support of the international community. Enhancing the coordination of the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other international partners is necessary to facilitate coherent and effective support for the electoral process, which is so critical not only for the peace and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also of the wider Great Lakes region.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his briefing. We have listened to the remarks made by Ms. Bandu Bahati and Mr. Nshole.

Located in the heart of the African continent, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an important African country. Peace and stability there affect the overall peace of the African continent. Over the past few years, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained complex and grave, characterized in particular by security and humanitarian challenges resulting from ongoing conflicts in some parts of the country, including in the east. In our view, the international community should focus its support and assistance on the following three aspects.

First, it must ensure that the ownership of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in addressing its domestic problems fully respects the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity. The Government shoulders the primary responsibility for protecting civilians. The international community should support the Government in beefing up its security capacity. The Security Council is now reviewing the mandate renewal for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). China supports MONUSCO in continuing to discharge its mandate, but also hopes that it will step up its communication and coordination with the Government and see its relevant mandate reinforced.

Secondly, the international community must steadily advance the domestic political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It should continue to engage all parties in the country, pushing for the peaceful settlement of differences through political consultation, dialogue and mediation. The African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other regional and subregional organizations play a major role in mediating the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and merit necessary and continued support from the international community.

Thirdly, the international community should continue to provide the country with humanitarian assistance, helping it to overcome urgent challenges, including food insecurity and internally displaced persons issues.

Having said that, more attention should be paid to helping the country to address economic and social issues by scaling up input in agriculture, education and infrastructure, among other areas, so as to effectively improve the local economic and social development conditions and provide guarantees for the rule of law and lasting peace and stability in the country.

China has all along been steadfast in supporting the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have been actively engaged in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the country and have provided the country with humanitarian assistance, including medical supplies and food. We have also assumed an active part in its economic and social development. Alongside the international community, China stands ready to continue playing a constructive role in the achievement of peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Netherlands for convening this meeting today to discuss the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as for shedding light on the human suffering there. To that end, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation made a recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to see at first hand the humanitarian situation on the ground. We also appreciate the briefings delivered by Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affair; Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati, Coordinator of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigenes et des Ménages Vulnérables and Abbé Donatien Nshole, Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo.

This meeting is important for us in terms of our priorities because of the scale of the humanitarian disaster that we are facing. We constantly stress that of all the topics on the Security Council agenda, the most critical are those directly related to the extent of human suffering. Most of that suffering is the result of a political tug-of-war, the repercussions of which usually endanger the lives of civilians, lead to severe shortages in food and medical supplies and cause low levels of security.

There is no doubt that prevarication in the implementation by the relevant parties of the political agreement that was signed on 31 December 2016, has led to the absence of security and stability and the severe deterioration in the humanitarian situation that we see today. The ongoing struggle among the armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has intensified over the past two years, particularly in the northern parts of the country, and has reached concerning levels. That has directly contributed to the escalation of the humanitarian crisis to catastrophic levels in some areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as described in reports issued by international organizations.

Some 13 million citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo rely on humanitarian aid as a main source of sustenance and survival, a 50 per cent increase compared to 2017. Furthermore, 7.7 million people suffer from severe food insecurity, a 30 per cent increase in just one year. More than 2 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition. Therefore, it is no surprise that the humanitarian situation is being described as catastrophic.

If we go back to recent times in 2017, we would note that nearly 2.2 million new internally displaced persons (IDPs) were scattered throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The total number of IDPs has risen to 4.5 million, the largest internally displaced persons on the African continent. Moreover, approximately 680,000 citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, which unfortunately has led to some clear violations of human rights. In this regard, we look forward to the outcome of the high-level humanitarian conference that will be hosted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and co-organized by the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations in Geneva, in order to raise funds to respond to the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The conference will take place on 13 April.

We fully believe that the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be resolved only through a comprehensive political solution, with continued efforts to enhance confidence-building measures, the timely holding of the presidential elections and bringing perpetrators of human rights violations to justice. In this connection, we would like to welcome the measures and actions currently being undertaken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to prepare for holding the three elections — presidential, legislative and municipal — on 23 December 2018, in accordance with the elections calendar. However, we hope that we do not have to wait until then to see alleviation in the suffering of the Congolese people, especially since the humanitarian situation is being classified by relief organizations as one of the worst in the world.

In closing, and with regard to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the mandate of which is due to expire at the end of the month, we would like to reaffirm the need to extend that mandate for an additional year. We support the efforts of those working in the Mission because it is an important contribution to the efforts of the Government in preparing for the upcoming political phase. We also note the importance of the continued coordination between the Government and international and regional organizations to support political stability, which is the main component in the alleviation of the suffering of the Congolese people.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the beginning, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative. I express our gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his very comprehensive briefing.

(*spoke in French*)

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati for her contribution, as well as Abbé Donatien Nshole for his briefing, which was quite moving. I thank them both.

(*spoke in English*)

Poland remains highly concerned by the dramatic deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation of the Congolese people. Yet despite the efforts of the international community, the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the

humanitarian needs have doubled since last year. Poland expresses high concern over the issue. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is recognized, for the second consecutive year, as the country worst affected by conflict-related displacement in the world.

In that context, I would like to underline the importance of the preventive aspect of assistance activities, in particular the need to address the root causes of the conflict and forced displacement. We believe that the holistic approach to preventive actions, including the promotion of dialogue between communities and facilitating community dialogue about conflict, may significantly contribute to easing tensions and improving the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Allow me now to share a few thoughts on humanitarian rights and international humanitarian law.

Widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including targeted attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, constitute a protection crisis. The security situation hinders humanitarian access to vulnerable communities. The Congolese authorities have to shoulder the responsibility for normalizing the situation in the country by protecting the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and implementing the measures envisaged in the 31 December New Year political agreement.

Cooperation with civil society, in particular with women's representatives, at both national and regional levels is crucial for women. We applaud the courage of 20 million women who, despite poverty and the violence during the registration procedures, queued up to participate in the upcoming elections. We note with concern that women are often targeted in the political process to intimidate female candidates and voters. We are also concerned about the acts of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which increased by 56 per cent last year. We call on the Government to strengthen measures to improve security, fight impunity for the perpetrators of sexual violence and protect their victims.

The continued conflict and dire humanitarian situation have also had a disproportionate effect on children, 2 million of whom are at risk of starvation. This requires a strong response on the part of the international community. We note with appreciation the continuing progress on the implementation of the action plan to address grave violations against children, but we still want to stress the importance of putting an immediate stop to all violations of children's rights by State security forces and bringing all perpetrators of such acts to justice, regardless of their affiliation or rank. However, we should not forget that demobilizing children is only a first step. The lack of reintegration options for children who have been demobilized increases the risk of their re-recruitment.

With regard to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), we would like to reiterate that Poland views the protection of civilians as crucial. That task should therefore remain one of MONUSCO's highest priorities, since the increase in armed violence renders rebuilding a viable political strategy for protecting civilians essential. MONUSCO's contribution to securing civilians' security and creating a space for humanitarian agencies has so far been vital to preventing the current crisis from escalating further. It should not be forgotten that many of the tensions and conflicts at a local level are the result of historically established reasons. The political stakeholders and the international community must make real efforts to address the drivers of these conflicts properly and assure the local communities that they will not be left to solve their problems alone.

In conclusion, we were pleased to note the visit planned by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that it will boost the confidence of all the parties involved in supporting that country. We commend the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the European Commission for their readiness to hold a donor conference on humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The recent cuts to assistance from agencies, owing to the shortage of funding, are extremely worrying and could result in the further escalation of one of the world's most serious humanitarian crises.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have taken note of the report by Mr. Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and we are grateful for his informative briefing and those of the other briefers, which were also helpful.

We are concerned about the rapid deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is sad that during the past year alone, according to United Nations estimates, we have seen the number of people in need of humanitarian aid grow by 50 per cent, while the cost of the humanitarian response plan for the country has almost doubled. We agree with the view that the reasons for the worsening humanitarian situation lie in the continuing inter-ethnic clashes and the activities of armed groups in the northern and eastern regions of the country. The situation with regard to food security, sanitation and epidemics is particularly worrying. A new wave of refugees will have negative humanitarian consequences both for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours, many of which are already dealing with acute humanitarian crises, and the Great Lakes region as a whole.

These developments pose new challenges for the humanitarian community that it is unlikely to be able to cope with, considering the current funding available for humanitarian assistance. It will be essential for donors to step up their support for United Nations activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours. For its part, Russia will continue to support such efforts. In particular, we are taking steps to relieve African countries' long-term debt. To date, we have written off more than $20 billion of underlying debt within the framework of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative, as well as implementing debt-for-development swaps. We consistently contribute to international assistance programmes for Africa through the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Civil Defence Organization, and we also provide aid to the health sector. We were one of the first countries to respond to the Ebola epidemic, contributing more than $60 million to combating it.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to those neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo who have been helping Congolese refugees. We will continue to provide them with appropriate assistance. Last year Russia sent dozens of KAMAZ trucks to Uganda for use in United Nations humanitarian operations there, and we plan to transfer additional transport units for use in Uganda to the WFP this year as well.

With regard to the country's overall situation, we hope that ensuring that the presidential elections scheduled for 23 December are held on time will help to reduce tensions in Congolese society. We call on the opposition forces to cooperate more actively with the Independent National Electoral Commission, recognize its proposed election dates and to refrain from any acts of violence. We are opposed to any efforts to mentor or impose recipes on Kinshasa regarding election issues. Nor should MONUSCO's role go beyond providing technical and logistical assistance to the national authorities in organizing and conducting the elections.

The primary responsibility for normalizing the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo belongs to its citizens themselves, and respect for the country's sovereignty is an absolute imperative. We again urge the Blue Helmets to act in accordance with the basic principles of peacebuilding and not to permit any interference in Kinshasa's internal affairs. Any situation in which MONUSCO supports a particular Congolese party is to be avoided at all costs. We assume that the Mission's main function is to stabilize the security situation, which in itself would also help to improve humanitarian access. In that connection, we would like to draw the Council's attention to the renewed activity of illegal armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where civilians, Government security forces and peacekeepers are being systematically attacked. We are also concerned about the reports that after years of quiet, inter-tribal conflicts in the north-east of the country have broken out again. Needless to say, we were all concerned about the series of rebel attacks on peacekeepers at the end of last year. All of those factors should be taken into account during the work on the new mandate for the United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We see no justification for the proposals in the Secretary-General's report on the results of the strategic review (S/2017/826) for reducing MONUSCO's implementation of its stabilization efforts and its cooperation with Kinshasa in support of the camps for ex-combatants. It will be impossible to ensure long-term solutions to the problem of armed groups without restoring State authority in the eastern part of the country and resolving the issue of the repatriation of former combatants. The implementation of the protection through projection concept endorsed by the Secretariat will hardly help to strengthen the security of civilians or ensure humanitarian access.

At this meeting, we would also like to take the opportunity to raise the issue of the working methods of the Council. As the discussion has shown, it is hardly worthwhile to discuss the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo separately from the military and political context. We would draw the attention of the Council to the fact that many of the ideas proposed by participants at today's meeting were also heard at the meeting on 7 March (see S/PV.8198). In that regard, we believe that it is important to prevent briefings that largely overlap in order not to reduce the effectiveness of the Council's work.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate the convening of this meeting. We thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati, Coordinator of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigenes et des Ménages Vulnérables, and Abbé Nshole, Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, for their briefings on the tragic humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Peru follows with particular concern the serious situation in which millions of Congolese people and refugees from neighbouring countries find themselves. Violence, food insecurity and budgetary limitations for humanitarian assistance have led to the largest number of displaced people in the world today. Women, girls and boys are particularly vulnerable.

We welcome the steps taken by the Congolese Government to establish a legal framework for the protection of internally displaced persons, including by completing the internal process for the ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. We therefore encourage that it be promptly deposited with the African Union Commission. We hope that that will be reflected in the necessary respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of the human rights of millions of people. In addition, we encourage the holding of fair, transparent and credible elections.

Attention should also be paid to the situation of the Congolese displaced to neighbouring countries, such as Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, who are forced to flee and to seek refuge due to the increasing violence in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those people must be guaranteed safe passage and access to humanitarian assistance.

Peru believes that it is essential that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to support the various humanitarian actors through logistical assistance and access to difficult areas in order for them to be able to carry out their work and for a greater number of people to have access to humanitarian aid.

We are particularly concerned about the increased vulnerability of 7 million Congolese women and girls in need of urgent protection and humanitarian assistance. We regret that that number has increased by 50 per cent over the past year. Child sex work and human trafficking must be rejected and addressed. We are also concerned about food insecurity. The violence has caused the abandonment of agricultural lands and the loss of harvests, exposing girls and boys to malnutrition. The economic situation of the country is unstable. We therefore deplore the reduction of financial support from the international community for such necessary humanitarian assistance.

We believe that it is imperative that the United Nations, through its agencies and in cooperation with the Government, the African Union and other humanitarian agencies and sources of cooperation, work on a long-term strategy that addresses the root causes of the crisis and envisages the possibility of a sustainable peace. Among other measures for sustainable development, that includes improving governance in agriculture and supporting development and rural employment. In that regard, we welcome the convening of a high-level humanitarian conference at the initiative of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations of the European Commission.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his briefing. We would like to commend the recent visit of Mrs. Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, with Under-Secretary-General Lowcock, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their drawing of international attention to the urgent humanitarian situation in that country. We also welcome the briefers of this meeting — Coordinator Bahati and Secretary-General Nshole.

We join others in expressing our deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, which is aggravated by the increasing violence, armed conflicts, poverty, malnutrition, drought, forced internal displacements and refugee flows.

We note the importance of the joint initiative of the United Nations, the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the European Union to host the first-ever high-level humanitarian conference on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to be held in Geneva on 13 April. We call on donors for greater support in order to respond to the needs of more than 13 million Congolese people.

The politically fragile and insecure situation heightens the existing crisis. It is therefore causing a vicious cycle of conflict and humanitarian tragedy, with one triggering the other. We therefore call for a political resolution of the crisis, adherence to the Constitution and the holding of timely, free, fair and credible elections, which could lead to stabilization and the gradual building of State institutions. The international community must support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in laying the foundations for good governance, the rule of law and reform of the security, law enforcement and judiciary sectors. The Government needs to encourage women and young people to participate in those processes.

Food security is also severely affected by the ongoing armed conflict, forcing farmers to flee and to miss the planting seasons. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNICEF and the World Food Programme, only 400,000 of the 3.2 million severely food insecure people in Kasai received assistance in December last year.

Women and children are the most vulnerable category of the country's population, leaving their homes to escape the horrific inter-ethnic violence and sexual abuse and, as a result, being exposed to difficult living conditions. With humanitarian needs having doubled since last year, more than 4.6 million Congolese children are acutely malnourished, including 2.2 million severe acute cases. Moreover, epidemics are spreading, making for the worst outbreak of cholera in 15 years.

Gender equality in all stabilization and development processes is important. The role of women in the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be overestimated. The broad participation of women in the upcoming elections and further nation-building measures should therefore be encouraged. Women activists, organizations and civil society networks must be guaranteed security.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has a central role to play in ensuring that protection is mainstreamed across the humanitarian action. The caseloads of refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and host communities are large and diverse. UNHCR therefore requires adequate funding for its life-saving work.

We need to address the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by looking at it through the prism of innovative strategy, as it influences the entire region and its causes and repercussions are interconnected with similar challenges in neighbouring states. Accordingly, we encourage all international and regional partners to actively engage in addressing the crisis through a revamped regional approach. The security track is closely interlinked with development through a range of multifaceted, mutually reinforcing factors. Investments in development are therefore critical as they validate the often-demonstrated formula of strengthening the security-development nexus, which is a key path to achieving sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region. We also commend the tireless efforts of humanitarian organizations and their personnel on the ground, while selflessly risking their own lives for the sake of saving others.

We call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to facilitate and ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access across the country. The role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is absolutely strategic and must reinforce operational and cost effectiveness, thereby contributing to filling gaps, together with other actors, especially with Government and international development stakeholders. We are convinced that all United Nations agencies should deliver as one United Nations in providing assistance in a more coordinated, transparent and efficient manner. We also emphasize the crucial role of confidence-building measures, as mentioned by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait.

Lastly, every human life is sacred, and people are the main asset and resource of any nation. The international community should make every effort in addressing the suffering of the Congolese people in a spirit of solidarity and sense of unity inspired by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting and your country and Minister's engagement.

Throughout its turbulent history, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has seldom been far from the Council's agenda. Likewise, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is always present when our colleagues in Geneva discuss humanitarian needs and appeals. For that reason, it is easy to dismiss the latest crisis as business as usual. However, as we have heard today, we clearly cannot. The current crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is catastrophic in scale. Civilians, particularly women and children, are bearing the brunt. It is a man-made disaster. Surging levels of violence fuelled by political instability and uncertainty are leading to forced displacements, coupled with sexual and gender-based violence, human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law — all of which are driving the humanitarian crisis. The trends and increasing rate in humanitarian needs are shocking and unprecedented. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing its worst humanitarian crisis in modern times.

We therefore welcome the initiative of the presidency and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to bring the humanitarian situation in the country to the attention of the Security Council. I also thank Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati and Abbé Nshole for their sobering briefings before the Council today. Let me also take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We look forward to hearing him later. Sweden fully supports the work of Mr. Lowcock, the United Nations and partners on the ground. As we have heard, the challenge is great, and it must be urgently addressed. Our response must be swift and, as Abbé Nshole said, correspond to the scale of the challenge. I will outline four areas that should be the focus of our efforts.

First, responding to immediate humanitarian needs will require a surge in funding. We welcome the upcoming high-level donor conference and hope that it will generate generous, reliable and flexible funding, as well draw attention to the situation in the country. Sweden will continue to provide significant and increasing humanitarian support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to meet increasing needs. Our contribution for 2018 is already $28 million. It is important that we all play our part. In such a complex context, the need for an integrated approach that addresses the nexus linking humanitarian, development, human rights and peace and security is clear. In its support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sweden has aligned its humanitarian and development support. We encourage others to do the same.

Full, safe and immediate humanitarian access for all those who are doing what they can with extremely limited funding and facing serious challenges must be ensured. The Government has a particular responsibility in that regard. We welcome the agreement between the United Nations and the Governor of Tanganyika on an enabling environment for humanitarian action. The security of humanitarian personnel is an essential element of access. Cooperation with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to guarantee safe passage to affected populations is critical.

Last week, we commemorated the one-year anniversary of the deaths of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, who were murdered. It was a sad reminder about the lack of accountability involving their deaths and how the security of United Nations personnel needs to be enhanced.

Secondly, we must simultaneously step up efforts to protect civilians who are increasingly at risk. The roots of the violence are complex, but the Government must shoulder its primary responsibility vis-à-vis the population to stop the surging violence and promote peaceful conflict resolution. In addition, MONUSCO must be properly equipped to effectively protect civilians.

Thirdly, in order to foster long-term stability and peace, the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections on 23 December, with the ensuing democratic transfer of power in accordance with the Constitution and the 31 December agreement is imperative. That is something we must all support, including local and regional actors, with whom close cooperation continues to be essential. What happens in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has broader consequences and risks jeopardizing the stability not only of that country but of the Great Lakes region. Measures to ensure women's full and effective participation in the elections are critical so that all sectors of Congolese society can play their full part in

the democratic process. As Ms. Bahati just said, women and girls must be accorded significantly more influence in every aspect of decision-making. That requires political space. It is important that freedom of speech and assembly be reasserted. In that regard, we welcome the recommendation from the Government commission of inquiry into the security forces' actions in response to peaceful protests to lift the ban on demonstrations.

Lastly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as elsewhere, the root causes of the conflict must be addressed if the country is to break free from a vicious cycle of poverty, insecurity and violence. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers a framework to curb the chronic vulnerability of many Congolese. The Government together with the assistance of the whole of the United Nations, as well as other parts of the international community, must now work together to make progress in alleviating poverty, ending inequality and creating a society in which all Congolese look to the future not with despair but hope. That will require an investment from the Government, including through increased mining revenues channelled towards the good of the people. On the part of the international community, there needs to be a comprehensive, integrated and resourced plan for sustained peace.

Mr. Green (United States of America): I thank Ambassador Haley for inviting me here, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Ambassador Van Oosterom for convening this briefing.

America sees the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an urgent priority for several reasons. The first is fiscal. Many hundreds of millions of dollars have been generously provided to alleviate suffering and foster economic development, but they are being robbed of their full value by crisis, conflict and poor governance. Last year alone, America's foreign assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo exceeded $546 million. Our humanitarian contributions totalled more than $209 million. The agency that I am privileged to lead — the United States Agency for International Development — contributed more than $130 million-worth of food assistance and more than $130 million for health programmes. Our taxpayers generously offered that assistance to help ease the immediate suffering, as well as lay a foundation for the eventual development journey to self reliance to which every people aspires. Yet disaster — not natural disaster like an earthquake or drought, but man-made disaster in the form of inhumane, authoritarian governance — is destroying any chance that those purposes will be met.

The second reason for giving high priority to this crisis is that it is not solely a crisis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is an international crisis. Brutal policies, sweeping corruption, poor governance and simmering conflict have displaced millions — 4.5 million internally — and hundreds of thousands have fled into neighbouring countries, imposing new burdens and risking regional instability.

Thirdly, and most importantly, like all Council members, the United States cares about this crisis because of the breathtaking human suffering it has inflicted. Some 43 per cent of children are chronically malnourished, over 57 per cent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, and the maternal mortality rate is among the world's highest. The messages we just heard from Mr. Lowcock, Ms. Bandu Bahati and Abbé Nshole are heart-rending.

Now, some will argue that the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo are too complex and too deeply ingrained for lasting solutions anytime soon. But that does not excuse us from our responsibility to act or from our responsibility to force steps in a new direction. We may not have all the answers, but we do know what is not working — the status quo.

On 18 January, the United Nations launched its 2018 humanitarian response plan, requesting nearly $1.7 billion to assist the country's most vulnerable. It is the largest such appeal to date because the level of suffering is the greatest seen in many years, and all of us should be ready to respond, but none of us should believe that merely expanding humanitarian assistance is actually addressing the country's greatest needs or its principal causes of suffering. Boosting assistance without also insisting upon concrete measurable action from the Kabila Government is the opposite of compassion. In some ways, it would make us all part of the problem. We respectfully suggest the following.

First, we must demand that credible elections take place this calendar year. Ambassador Haley has made clear that United States support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not inevitable, unlimited or unconditional. It will be sharply re-evaluated if the elections currently scheduled for December are delayed yet again. Like many others, we have lost patience with the excuses that have been offered. They are

increasingly disingenuous. To be clear, these elections need not be technologically "state of the art". Some of the most important votes of our time have relied on purple fingers and simple paper ballots. Countries with challenges as great and circumstances as difficult as those of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have held credible elections and lifted their futures. The Democratic Republic of the Congo must do the same, or else we must rethink our support and our approach.

Secondly, we should demand that the Government foster the conditions that make true democracy possible. It must take immediate steps to make clear that citizens will be free to express their will and choose their own future. It could act this very day to protect the fundamental rights of speech and assembly. It could begin restoring basic services and rule of law this week. Instead of protecting its people from harm, which is the primary responsibility of any Government, the Kabila Government has actually been implicated in over 60 per cent of the nearly 7,000 human rights violations reported in the last year.

Thirdly, an unshakable demand for the continuation of assistance must be the safety of the courageous humanitarian workers labouring under the most trying of circumstances. Last year, there were 158 reported security incidents targeting humanitarian workers — kidnapping, road ambushes, robberies, and so forth. Two United Nations experts — one of them American — were abducted and killed. There is no excuse for this savagery or the failure of the Government to prevent it.

Fourthly, the United States believes that other countries must step forward and also do more to help. To be clear, we are proud of the leadership role we play as a humanitarian donor, but given all the needs in so many parts of the world, we expect others to come forward and do their part too. An international crisis requires an international response. This demand begins with the Government itself. It has done so little to alleviate suffering, even as many of its leaders have apparently been lining their own pockets. According to the Congo Research Group, the Kabila family owns either partially or wholly more than 80 of the country's largest businesses and more than 450 miles of diamond concessions. At the same time, 27 per cent of primary age children miss school because their parents cannot afford the fees.

We make these demands because they will offer the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo their first real hope of a brighter future. We each represent humane, compassionate people, but true compassion requires more than providing money. It requires us to use our collective influence to demand concrete actions that will end cycles of misery. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is hopeless only if we do nothing. These are steps we can take, beginning with the demands we can make as donors. We can insist upon timely elections, demand the freedoms that make those elections credible, require protection for brave humanitarian workers and ensure that everyone does his or her part to ease citizen suffering, especially the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the initiative taken by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, to organize a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to learn about the humanitarian situation on the ground. We also thank Mr. Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who also recently visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his briefing on the humanitarian situation in the country. Finally, the Ivorian delegation thanks Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati and Abbé Donatien Nshole for their poignant and informative contributions on the experience of the populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It welcomes the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

Côte d'Ivoire remains concerned about the serious humanitarian crisis being experienced by its sister republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because, in addition to the tragic briefings we have just heard on the situation in the country, according to the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/174) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), there are at least 13 million people, including 4.5 million internally displaced persons and 670,000 refugees in neighbouring countries, in particular Burundi, Tanzania, Uganda, Angola and Zambia, in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection. The report also indicates that 7.7 million people suffer from severe food insecurity and that more

than 2 million children are acutely malnourished, all of whom require urgent assistance.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also experiencing a major cholera crisis, with nearly 3,000 suspected cases reported. These figures call on us not only to respond urgently to the continuing deterioration of the security situation, but also to take into account the necessary support of the international community for the efforts of the Congolese authorities.

Côte d'Ivoire believes that it is important to combat the insecurity prevailing in the country, caused by attacks by armed groups against civilian populations and by clashes among these groups. These attacks are the main cause of forced displacement and mass exodus of populations to neighbouring countries. Similarly, the humanitarian crisis situation in the country has been made more complex by inter-ethnic conflicts and intercommunity violence in some of the country's provinces, fuelled by traditional rivalries between communities and the difficulties of gaining access to or delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In view of the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we must act without delay to provide for the basic needs of the populations on the ground, which, according to the United Nations, have grown twofold since the end of last year and are estimated to be $1.7 billion for this year. In that regard, Côte D'Ivoire calls on the international community to support the efforts of the Congolese authorities and local non-governmental organizations by increasing assistance to displaced persons and refugees and by strengthening actions to improve the security situation in the country.

My country appreciates the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbouring States that are hosting the flow of refugees, and encourages them, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to create conditions conducive to a voluntary and safe return to the countries of origin.

My delegation welcomes the work undertaken by international humanitarian organizations in a complex and difficult environment, and invites them to maintain their valuable support for refugees and internally displaced persons, with special emphasis on women and children, who are most vulnerable in conflict situations. Côte D'Ivoire also encourages States signatories to the Framework Agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region to put an end to the recurring cycles of conflict that fuel the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and jeopardize the stability and development not only of that country but of the entire Great Lakes region.

In conclusion, my delegation stresses the importance of mobilizing the resources necessary to remediate the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to that end encourages the international community and all bilateral and multilateral partners to increase their support not only to the Government of that country, but also to the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It invites the donor community and funding partners to take active part in the very first high-level international humanitarian conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which will be organized by the United Nations, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates on 13 April as part of a rapid and adequate response to the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock; Abbé Donatien Nshole, Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo; and Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati, Coordinator of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigenes et des Ménages Vulnérables, whose briefings illustrate and help us to better understand the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also express our gratitude to the Netherlands for having undertaken the initiative to hear these briefings in order to focus the attention of the members of the Council on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are among Equatorial Guinea's priorities during its membership of the Security Council. We are resolutely committed to supporting and playing a constructive role in the peace process in that sister country of Central Africa, the Great Lakes region and southern Africa.

The full normalization of the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be complicated if the data on the humanitarian situation

remain so devastating. The number of internally displaced persons now exceeds 4.5 million — the highest number in all of Africa. More than 13 million people depend on humanitarian aid to survive, while more than 7 million live in severe food insecurity and more than 2 million children are malnourished. These figures are very alarming and should attract the attention of the international community with a view to providing urgent humanitarian aid. Failure to do so will have even more catastrophic consequences. The cases of human rights violations and abuses are still alarmingly high. Most cases remain unpunished, while their perpetrators campaign freely with a high probability of repeating their offenses. The upsurge in violence in Ituri province contributes greatly to the deterioration of the situation. The authors of these horrendous crimes must face justice.

Although there has been some progress, the security situation in the country still presents some challenges. The achievement of lasting peace, prosperity and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains an arduous task and has a long way to go. That is an important aspect in remediating the deteriorated humanitarian situation. It therefore needs the continued support of the international community, especially in financing the activities of humanitarian organizations.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea insists on the guaranteed implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, formulated on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, and that its signatories and guarantors take the necessary steps to ensure its effective implementation, to which the neutralization of the armed groups that operate in the east of the country is critical.

In accordance with the conclusions of the thirtieth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union of Addis Ababa in January, and the communiqué issued following the tripartite meeting, held in Kinshasa between Presidents Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Congo, João Lourenço of Angola and Joseph Kabila Kabange of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 14 February, Equatorial Guinea welcomes the progress that has been registered in the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the commitment of President Kabila and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to complying with the electoral calendar established on 5 November 2017 and the agreement of 31 December 2016. The progress made by the Independent National Electoral Commission in registering voters and acquiring voting machines are steps in the right direction.

Equatorial Guinea reiterates once again its appeal to both the Government and the main opposition parties to resolve their differences through frank and inclusive dialogue and to pool their efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in the country. The international community must provide constructive assistance to those efforts and the path freely chosen by the Congolese, while the sovereignty of the country must always be respected. The countries of the region — which we commend for their solidarity — must also contribute to these efforts.

The important role played by the African Union, alongside the United Nations and the European Union, must be supported by the work of such regional and subregional organizations as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Southern African Development Community to achieve better coordination.

In conclusion, I should like once again to underscore the important work being done by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for peace, security and stability in that sister country. We encourage it to spare no effort at this time of great challenges leading up to the elections scheduled for 23 December. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea unreservedly supports the renewal of the Mission's mandate.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I thank our briefers for their clear and detailed accounts. They have set out why there has been such a rapid increase in humanitarian needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As Under-Secretary-General Lowcock reported, the number of people in need of aid in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has doubled in the past year. Today 13.1 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance — the same number as in Syria. The United Nations has declared the worst level of humanitarian crisis — level 3 — in certain provinces, putting the Democratic Republic of the Congo alongside only Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Yet it is often absent from our screens and daily briefings. We must not let it fall further down our agenda.

We are extremely concerned about the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, especially women and girls, the disabled and children. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office reported that there was a 53 per cent increase in the number of victims of sexual violence in 2017.

I thank the representative of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigènes et des Ménages Vulnérables for her powerful testimony. Hope is a woman from Masisi, in the east of the country, where 90 per cent of women have been raped. Four men in military uniforms raped her as she collected firewood for her family. The attack left her pregnant and HIV-positive. She has since fled to a temporary camp in Goma and can no longer feed her eight children. They rely on humanitarian aid, like 8 million other Congolese children. Two million children currently face starvation.

Hope is one of 4.5 million internally displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the highest number in Africa. More than 2 million people have been displaced in the past year alone. Just in the past year, the number of people displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo matched the total number of internally displaced persons in South Sudan. There are an additional 740,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in neighbouring countries as a result of ongoing hostilities.

International support is vital to address the crisis, and the United Kingdom will continue to play a key role. We have committed to spending $285 million on humanitarian aid between 2017 and 2020. That support will provide more than 3 million people with life-saving assistance, including food, clean drinking water and essential health care. To improve the challenging and limited access for humanitarian actors, the support of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is crucial. While we welcome the commitments made to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations and reduce tariffs for humanitarian imports, including medicines and food, this Council and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must see concrete and sustained action.

In particular, we urge the Government to take the following three steps. First, it should improve the administrative and financial registration procedures required for international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to operate lawfully in the country, through consultations with NGOs themselves. Secondly, it should reduce the bureaucracy for humanitarian workers to obtain visas and for essential relief items to be cleared at customs. Finally, it needs to ensure that security across the country is maintained so that humanitarian organizations have sufficient access to those most in need.

The upcoming donor conference on 13 April is an opportunity for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to demonstrate the progress they have made on commitments to facilitate the improvement of the humanitarian situation. It is also an opportunity for the international community to pledge our support to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to show them that the world remembers Africa's forgotten crisis.

Let me be clear — humanitarian aid will provide only temporary relief in this crisis. The key root cause is political instability, which drives the deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Too often peaceful protesters are met with violence for speaking out about their political rights, in violation of their human rights. A number of people have been killed in church-led protests this year, which we must all condemn. Free, fair and transparent elections must be held on 23 December. With an estimated 46 million voters spread across the world's eleventh largest country, that is no easy task. For the elections to be successful, the right conditions need to be created now.

The international community must remain focused and united in our support for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We must remain united in our expectations of its Government and in our insistence on accountability and progress. We in the Security Council need to work with the region and subregion to do so.

Finally, it is with great sadness that we remember the horrific, tragic murders of United Nations experts Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, killed just over one year ago in the Kasaï region. The Council must continue to push for accountability for their deaths. We call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the investigation is thorough and transparent and that all those responsible are held to account. We should have a full update on the progress on that investigation soon.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock,

for his briefing and commend him on his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last week. We also thank the Coordinator of the Encadrement des Femmes Indigènes et des Ménages Vulnérables, Ms. Jeanine Bandu Bahati, and the Secretary-General of the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, Abbé Donatien Nshole, for their briefings.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General paints a bleak picture of the security and humanitarian situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and provides a comprehensive overview of ceaseless violence, including disputes over natural resources, clashes among armed groups and between communities, and inter-ethnic violence. Bolivia firmly condemns all violence, including that during the protests in December and January. But above all, we are concerned about the threat of armed groups in various parts of the country, as they are primarily responsible for the deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

We also condemn all acts to exacerbate tensions and incite violence and all acts of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. We believe that all such allegations must be investigated, including those reported to involve possible participation of the national police or the armed forces. In that regard, we laud the culmination, on 13 December, of the trial concerning the rape of 38 girls, in which 12 of the accused were sentenced to life in prison. It is an important step in the fight against impunity, which should continue. The perpetrators of that type of crime must be investigated, brought to justice and sentenced by the relevant courts.

Regrettably, the consequences of violent acts committed chiefly by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have reached catastrophic levels. Nearly 4.5 million people have been internally displaced, including about 900,000 women and more than 2 million boys and girls last year. Similarly, in recent years, more than 680,000 Congolese have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including 100,000 in 2017. Approximately 8 million people face severe food insecurity, which is an increase of 30 per cent relative to the same period the previous year. It is estimated that 13 million people are in need of protection and humanitarian assistance this year — an increase of 50 per cent relative to last year. Special attention must be paid to this situation, particularly in the Kasaï region, Tanganyika and South Kivu, which has been classified as a level 3 emergency, the highest level, according to the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

As a result of this deplorable humanitarian crisis, the budget for the humanitarian response plan has doubled to more than $1.6 billion for this year, only 4.3 per cent of which has been raised so far. In that regard, we commend the joint work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the United Arab Emirates and the European Union Commission in organizing a high-level humanitarian conference, to be held on 13 April, in order to mobilize funds and respond to the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the international community to continue cooperating in order to ensure that the plan can rely on sustainable financing.

We call on all the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance. We commend the work of the military and civilian personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the personnel of the humanitarian agencies, who, despite a climate of insecurity and violence, risk their lives on a daily basis in order to relieve the suffering of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We would like to call on the parties to work to ease tensions and comply with the agreement of 31 December 2016 by implementing its confidence-building measures in order to hold credible and inclusive elections in an effective and timely manner, bearing in mind that the equal participation of women is fundamental to all phases of the process.

Lastly, we believe it is important to think about the current needs of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO and its regional and subregional partners must work together and in coordination in order to address the root causes of the conflict, particularly the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The principles of preventive diplomacy and good offices should not be forgotten in the efforts to achieve a negotiated political solution, since it is the Congolese people and their institutions who should take the decisions on the future of their country. We support their decisions with regard to their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, with a view to achieving peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I shall now speak in my capacity as the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

More than 6,000 people live in Katanika camp, in eastern Congo. My Foreign Trade Minister Sigrid Kaag visited the camp with Under-Secretary-General Lowcock last week. There she met a woman whom I will call Françoise. Françoise had lost her husband and child in a militia raid. Ms. Kaag was deeply touched by her ordeal. It is women like Françoise who continue to bear the brunt of this crisis. It is for women like Françoise that we come together here. Today, I will highlight three points. The first is the need to step up our immediate response; the second, to address the root causes of the crisis; and third, to intensify engagement with the region.

My first point concerns the importance of an immediate response. More than 13 million Congolese are in need. That number has doubled over the past two years. More than 2 million children are severely and acutely malnourished. They cannot be forgotten. They need our help. We are also concerned about increasing attacks on humanitarian workers. The security situation directly affects humanitarian access. The Congolese authorities and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) must protect humanitarian actors against kidnappings and attacks on their assets. This month, we have the chance to give MONUSCO the mandate and the means it needs to be able to prevent escalation. The Security Council must increase its efforts, and we should discuss this situation more frequently. The Kingdom of the Netherlands therefore strongly supports organizing a Security Council visit this year. We must act now to prevent further escalation. The situation in Ituri in particular has our full attention.

My second point is that we must address the root causes of this man-made crisis. The escalation that has occurred since 2016 is directly linked to the political crisis. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must regain hope and trust in their country. A renewed commitment to the New Year's agreement by all parties is therefore urgently needed. Despite some progress, the conditions conducive to credible elections are not there yet. In the current circumstances, hundreds of thousands of people will not be able to fully participate in the elections simply because they are too scared, because they are on the run from widespread and unpunished human rights violations, or because they are women — women like Françoise. Without women's meaningful participation in the elections, nationally, provincially and locally, there will be no peace. We call on the Congolese authorities to ensure women's participation in the electoral law. All political actors must increase their efforts to engage women in the elections.

Thirdly, I want to discuss the role of the region. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has long ceased to be merely a Congolese issue, if it ever was. It is the largest displacement crisis in Africa, and it has direct consequences for the region. The peaceful involvement of regional stakeholders is essential to a sustainable solution. The Kingdom of the Netherlands commends the efforts of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and individual Member States to find a peaceful solution. We call on them to increase their efforts, as we call on the Council to increase its efforts. We welcome the presence today of so many representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours and other countries in the region.

In conclusion, as our briefers have highlighted, only the concerted efforts of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their neighbours and regional and international partners can make a definitive difference for good. The relevant humanitarian partners require $1.7 billion this year alone, as Mr. Lowcock explained earlier. On 13 April, therefore, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, together with the United Nations, the European Commission and the United Arab Emirates, will organize the first ever humanitarian donor conference for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It will take place in Geneva. Only a concerted effort will enable the mobilization of sufficient humanitarian relief. We hope that all States Members of the United Nations will support that humanitarian conference. We must work together, all of us, for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for people like Françoise.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I would like to once again remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to convey the apologies of Mr. Bernard Biando Sango, Minister of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He will be arriving in New York a little late today and will not be able to attend today's meeting despite his efforts. He has asked me to assure Council members of his solidarity and wish us success in our work.

Before I deliver my statement, my delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to organize this meeting on the humanitarian situation in my country. We are also grateful to Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands, and Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo together in order to see for themselves the humanitarian situation on the ground.

In the absence of Mr. Biando Sango, who would have briefed Council members in detail on the situation, I will keep my statement short. The fact is that my country has been dealing with a humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of people for more than two decades. This situation is the result of recurring armed conflicts, mainly in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries, natural disasters and other calamities, as well as various epidemics.

With regard to armed conflicts, it is the continuing insecurity resulting from the activity of domestic and foreign armed groups in the eastern part of the country that is at the root of the massive and ongoing displacement of formerly settled populations, who lived mainly as farmers and livestock herders. There is a similar situation in the greater Kasai area, where there have been clashes with the traditional chief Kamuina Nsapu's militia; in Tanganyika province, with the conflict between Bantu and Pygmies; and currently in Ituri, with the armed groups operating in that part of the country. At the same time, the conflicts in neighbouring countries such as the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Burundi have caused an influx of refugees from those countries, not to mention those who preceded them at an earlier period from other neighbours such as Rwanda and Uganda, following armed conflicts and political disagreements among the Governments in power in those countries, as was the case with the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

This situation of armed conflict has been compounded by natural disasters — torrential rains, floods and landslides — and the resurgence of some previously eradicated epidemic diseases, not to mention food insecurity, which we should point out is mainly due to a poor farming season resulting in lower crop yields and a shortfall in maize production.

Despite the Government's efforts to restore peace in areas affected by armed conflict, the humanitarian consequences are still enormous. We are working to come up with solutions. It goes without saying that any contribution on the part of the international community to help us address the situation is very welcome. In that regard, I should point out that my country continues to benefit from international solidarity efforts. A number of donors, United Nations agencies and international and national humanitarian organizations continue to support us in helping our vulnerable members of society.

As I said, my Government welcomed Ms. Kaag and Mr. Lowcock's visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and appreciated their discussions with Government authorities. During their delegation's high-level meeting with the Government, led by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport and Communications, standing in for the Prime Minister, it was agreed that the classification of my country's situation as a humanitarian emergency, which the Government considers excessive, would be revisited. While we recognize that we are dealing with emergency situations, they in no way warrant a designation as exaggerated as the international community claims. We hope that the Council will take my Government's position on the issue into consideration.

With that in mind, and with a view to harmonizing the views on this issue, before the conference to be held in Geneva we have therefore decided to convene a meeting of our national framework for consultation on humanitarian action, the State body responsible for coordinating our humanitarian response, which is also a forum for dialogue where humanitarian actors can exchange information and take independent decisions with a view to reaching a common understanding on the conduct of humanitarian affairs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the intervention of the Government and the international community is providing an effective and

lasting solution to the humanitarian crisis in the parts of my country affected by natural disasters, calamities and epidemics, we do not believe that the same is true in the areas where armed groups are operating. The Council will agree with us that if we cannot eradicate all the negative forces operating there, it will be difficult if not impossible to put an end to the situation. That is why my Government, which is committed to peace throughout our territory, is relentlessly and resolutely pursuing its efforts to completely neutralize and eradicate all of these forces. Although our efforts are already supported by the United Nations, through the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which already has a robust mandate for that from the Council, we believe that beyond the solutions my Government has proposed and the contributions expected from the international community, it would also be helpful to consider, as one of the possible solutions to the problems underlying the worrying humanitarian situation, particularly with regard to the foreign armed groups, a political dialogue between those groups and their countries of origin, especially in view of the results achieved so far.

I should not conclude without once again emphasizing the significant and invaluable contributions made by the financial sponsors and donors in responding to our humanitarian needs in order to help the vulnerable people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My Government is truly grateful for their support. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, and all the members of the Council for their consideration of the situation in my country.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8208

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8208th meeting
Monday, 19 March 2018, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Pierce

Agenda

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

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18-07521 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Council has before it the text of a statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank Council members for their valuable contributions to this statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among the members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2018/6.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8209

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8209th meeting

Monday, 19 March 2018, 3.20 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kuzmin
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Provisional agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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18-07515 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As far as I know, today's meeting was not scheduled in the Security Council's agreed programme of work for this month. Our delegation would be extremely grateful to you, Mr. President, if you could explain what exactly we are supposed to discuss at today's meeting and whom the Council plans to invite as briefers.

The President: The representative of France has asked for the floor.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France and six other Council members asked for this briefing to be held for both functional and substantive reasons. With regard to the functional reasons, in order to act, the Council should have at its disposal all the information it needs to understand the crises it considers, including information on human rights. That is particularly the case with Syria, where, as we all know, the human rights dimension has been inextricably linked to the dynamics of the conflict from the outset. There have been other briefings by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on situations on the Council's agenda. Syria should not and cannot be an exception.

That brings me to the basic reason for our collective request. Our last such briefing on Syria, by then-High Commissioner Navi Pillay, was in 2014. Human rights are a fundamental aspect of the crisis that the Council has not dealt with since then, even though violations of human rights are at the heart of the conflict and its intensification, to the detriment of international peace and security. The briefing we decided to call for will therefore complement those that have been devoted to the humanitarian, chemical and political situations in Syria. If we do not have an understanding of the human rights dimension of the conflict in Syria and the potential solution to it, we are simply being unrealistic and in denial. Who could understand it? The regime, along with other parties, especially Da'esh, has violated people's rights not just as a consequence of the fighting but by using such violations as a chosen, deliberate weapon and instrument of control over territories and populations.

Lastly, human rights are inseparable from a political settlement of the conflict. If the Council wishes to commit in good faith to ensuring that the same atrocities are not repeated, it must contribute to a political solution based on a Syrian society that offers inclusion for all its sectors, as well as institutions that respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Syrians. For all those reasons and others, France has called for this meeting and urges all members of the Council to express their willingness for it to be held.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation is opposed to holding today's meeting, as we immediately informed our colleagues on Friday, 16 March. We see no justification for such a meeting, since human rights is not a subject on the Security Council's agenda. That is what the Human Rights Council deals with in its work in Geneva. The mere presence of Mr. Ra'ad Hussein in New York is not a convincing reason for him to brief the Security Council.

However, as I understand it, the French delegation, along with a number of others, has already explained the real reasons behind today's meeting. They want to hear about how the Syrian regime, as they refer to it, is violating the rights of its own people. I note once again that their subject is that infamous regime, rather than the extremists whom they openly support and who have been terrorizing the people of Syria for eight years now. That only confirms our fears about the deeply politicized nature of this initiative, which has nothing to do with concern for the Syrians.

We would also like to ask the Secretariat to explain the reason for circulating to delegations a note on human rights in Syria from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, despite the fact that we did not request that information. The United Nations system is not organized so that any United Nations body can send the Security Council any information it feels like. We believe that the Secretariat blindly obeyed the delegations that decided to hold this briefing, in violation of the division of labour among the main organs of our Organization, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. In the circumstances, we believe it essential to cancel the meeting and we are

therefore obliged to ask the President to put the issue to a procedural vote.

The President: In view of the request of the Russian Federation and the comments made by members of the Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would just like to explain that the item on our agenda, "The situation in the Middle East", is an existing agenda item and that of course we are not against it per se. What we are against is holding today's meeting in the format that has been proposed. Therefore, I would ask the President to formulate the question to reflect the fact this is a procedural vote.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): The United States strongly supports the holding of today's meeting and urges all Council members to support the procedural vote in favour of proceeding as planned today. The Russian Federation's continued efforts to obstruct the Council's work and its attention to grave and systemic human rights violations by the Russian Federation's allies are appalling, and the Council should not allow them to stand.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Charter of the United Nations clearly outlines the functions of and divisions of labour among all the main organs of the United Nations. The primary role of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security, not to consider human rights issues. Pushing the Security Council into discussing human rights issues erodes the functions of other United Nations organs and will not help us to find an effective solution to the issue. China opposes holding deliberations in the Security Council on such issues, and in particular on questions of human rights in Syria.

The President: I would like to ask the representative of the Russian Federation to clarify what he wants to be put to a vote, if he wants a procedural vote.

Mr. Kuzmin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We propose voting on whether the meeting should be held today or not. Obviously, we assume that the issue that should be put to the vote is whether today's meeting should be held in principle. We have not yet adopted the agenda for today's meeting. If we had, the meeting would take place. But that has not happened.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the provisional agenda for today's meeting. I shall put the provisional agenda to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia

The President: The provisional agenda received 8 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 3 abstentions. The provisional agenda has not been adopted, having failed to obtain the required number of votes.

The meeting rose at 3.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8210

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8210th meeting
Wednesday, 21 March 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Mr. Mielus
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2018/171)

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18-07879 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Note by the President of the Security Council (S/2018/171)

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2018/238, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/171, which contains a note by the President of the Security Council.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Côte D'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2407 (2018).

The meeting rose at 10.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8211

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8211th meeting

Wednesday, 21 March 2018, 10.10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Lie Cheng
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2018/140)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Libya

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (S/2018/140)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Libya to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Salamé is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Tripoli.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/140, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Salamé and Ambassador Carl Orrenius Skau, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of Sweden, on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods (S/2017/507), I wish to encourage all participants, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are further encouraged to limit initial remarks to 15 minutes or less.

I now give the floor to Mr. Salamé.

Mr. Salamé: Let me, at the outset, congratulate the Kingdom of the Netherlands on assuming the presidency of the Security Council.

I am briefing the Council from Tripoli, where I now live, as do an increasing number of my colleagues. For the United Nations to best support Libya, we must be in Libya. I am proud to announce that we have truly returned to the country. But we are here for the whole of Libya, and not for any one region or city. Accordingly, we are now looking to reopen our office in Benghazi. Once conditions permit, we will also seek to reopen in the south. The United Nations has visited cities and towns across the country in which it has not stepped foot for years, and it shall continue to do so. It is essential that we hear from all Libyans and, whenever possible, from where they live.

In early March, I spent three days in Benghazi. I saw a city devastated by three years of conflict. Its downtown is in ruins. Signs of the recent fighting are ubiquitous. I heard strong concerns over the economic and political situation in the country. But, behind the heated speech, there was a widespread willingness to make a fresh start and a sense of optimism. Citizens are mobilizing to rebuild their city. One of many examples is the Benghazi University faculty, who have taken the rebuilding of their university into their own hands. That spirit provides new hope — a hope we must nurture.

Libya was once a country known for its great demographic fluidity. Citizens were willing to speak to one another, traverse the land to meet, marry and trade with one another, or settle in cities far from their place of birth, all the while carrying their personal identity.

Since 2011, this demographic fluidity has been constrained, if not altogether strangled. That has produced more than 300,000 internally displaced persons, who are unable to go back to their homes and often live in miserable conditions. Others have been forced to flee the country altogether. Groups have refused to live with one another. Ideological or identity cleavages have led to widespread ostracism. A discourse of hatred has replaced peaceful interaction. This has been demonstrated most recently by the people of Tawergha, whose return was blocked and many of whom now live in temporary shelters. We have conveyed a plan to expedite the overcoming of this impasse.

More generally, we are committed to reversing mutual exclusion and sterile seclusion. Unless Libyans from all stripes and segments can come together to speak, they will be unable to agree. And unless they agree, the political process cannot progress. Through our own efforts or working with our partners, we have made progress in reversing this situation. We

have reached out to constituencies that had been marginalized, including partisans of the former regime. We have convinced ethnic groups, rival cities and political parties that have not spoken to one another for several years to come together.

My mission is not to slice the cake between competing greeds. First and foremost, it is to bring Libyans together around a common national narrative. That common narrative is crucial. We have seen a range of initiatives — some supported by the United Nations and its partners, many instigated by the Libyans themselves — to rewrite it. Mayors from all across Libya have met together, first in Tunisia and then in Libya, to discuss vital issues of service delivery. They were hosted in the homes of the people of Shahat, in the east, and met again just few days ago in Tripoli, in the west. Popular movements are starting across the country, demanding change and an end to plundering. Members of the House of Representatives and the High State Council have engaged with each other to maintain ties and alleviate divisions. The United Nations has supported local communities in conflict to forge reconciliation agreements. Armed groups that were fighting each other just months ago have accepted to sit around the same table. Facilitating some of these discussions, the United Nations has helped successfully prevent clashes, sometimes at the very last minute. These many activities and efforts are part and parcel of the process of the national conference, which will ultimately gather after the holy month of Ramadan.

Libyans insistently remind us of their wish for a new period of stability and certainty built on accountable and unified institutions. The present institutions are based on shallow legitimacy. They are built on tenuous mandates or are divided into competing bodies. To lead and unify the people and take difficult decisions for their own good, the Government must come from the people. That means that elections must be held.

For the United Nations, working for the conduct of fair, free and credible elections before the end of the year is at the top of our priorities. It is vital that, before elections take place, we are certain that they will be inclusive and their results accepted. It is for that reason I am pleased that voter registration, which ended 10 days ago, was very successful. With 1 million new registrants, 2.5 million Libyans are now eligible to vote. There was strong participation by women and youth in the voter registration update. Such remarkable participation is a clear message to all. The Libyan people want their voices heard though elections.

At the International Women's Day event, I called on women to translate their higher participation as registrants into higher participation as candidates. The United Nations will continue to support the High Commission for National Elections in preparing for elections and will spare no effort in addressing the other preconditions for successful elections. Laws are required for any election to take place, and they must be drafted in a consensual manner. Efforts to adopt a permanent national constitution continue. A draft was approved by the Constitution Drafting Assembly on 29 July 2017. It went through a judicial challenge and, on 14 February 2018, the Supreme Court recognized the validity of the Assembly's vote on the draft. However, hurdles remain to the conduct of a constitutional referendum. The question of referendum legislation remains very controversial, while some factions are clearly not satisfied with the content of the draft Constitution. However, the political process must continue, as the status quo is untenable. I ask the Council to make the message on the unsustainability of the status quo clear to all leaders of the country.

While there is reason for optimism in the political process, there is also cause for concern. A backdrop of continued violence and localized conflicts persists. Extremists, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida, continue to maintain a presence in Libya and recently have carried out attacks. Armed groups, including those formerly integrated into State structures, continue to operate outside of the law, including perpetrating human rights abuses. Bodies bearing signs of torture have turned up in many locations. Libyan men, women and children are increasingly kidnapped for profit, even in the heart of the capital. Citizens are arbitrarily arrested by shadowy security forces. People are held and abused in unofficial, official or quasi-official detention prisons.

In the south, the situation in Sabha is currently of serious concern. There have been a number of fatalities, including civilians. The complex network of local animosities, the ongoing jostling by national political and military players and the growing presence of foreign mercenaries seriously complicate the situation. The conflict risks taking on a transnational dimension that could further destabilize Libya. To prevent further escalation, I have expressed the willingness of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to

mediate should the parties request it. I call on Member States to support Libya's fragile transition by urging their partners there to embrace the political process and not arms. There is space for all in civilian life. It is abundantly clear that no military faction can hope to conquer the country.

The provision of security in Libya should be a matter for national institutions, and not for the numerous armed groups. UNSMIL has embarked on a broad conversation with the leaders of those groups to better understand their perspectives. Too many young men earn a living by carrying weapons. They should instead be reintegrated into civilian life. Before May, we expect to unveil a strategy to do so. However, we must be realistic. In a country awash with arms, disarmament will require time and much stronger national institutions. Furthermore, the arrival of more arms in Libya will only hamper such efforts and damage the political process. Unfortunately, more weapons are indeed being imported. I urge the Council to exert its utmost influence to stop arms from entering Libya.

At the heart of Libya's problems is an economic system of predation that degrades the lives of ordinary Libyans and serves the interests of the powerful. It is the main obstacle to the political process and cements the status quo. I was concerned about it when I first arrived; now I am truly disturbed. That system must be shattered. Resources must flow into building a strong, equitable State for all, and not into the pockets of the few. We have built knowledge and expertise on the matter. I am grateful to the Panel of Experts for their contribution. The United Nations and partner institutions must comprehensively address economic plundering as a key pillar of our engagement.

Human trafficking is but one of the elements of the perverted economy. It is also the most morally reprehensible. Such trade has become the main source of income for some people, leaving them numb to the sight of humans being traded as commodities or of migrants being left to die as they fall off packed pick-up trucks. Libya is a destination, a transit country and a source of migration. Such an important issue, which affects the lives of hundreds of thousands, must be addressed strategically and across borders. I thank our partners in the African Union, the European Union and the League of Arab States for their excellent cooperation on the issue and on the political process in Libya.

Libya's finances remain precarious. Despite the country now producing well over 1 million barrels of oil a day and generating rosy macroeconomic indicators, it does not enjoy true economic recovery. Instead, Libyan people become poorer every year. Women from the once wealthy Tripoli bourgeoisie confess to putting their teenage children to work. Elders from the east lament that their own internal tribal emergency welfare funds are now depleted. Basic health and education services decay, while frustrated citizens cannot understand why the surge in oil production translates into a further decline in living standards. To address the needs of the most vulnerable and of internally displaced persons, on 25 January we launched a new humanitarian response plan to provide life-saving assistance to almost 1 million people a year. There are signs of a looming monetary and fiscal crisis. Although now high, oil revenues are vulnerable to underinvestment and sabotage. Financial institutions are divided. Government expenditure is bloated and continues to increase, but thus far increased spending has not led to improved services.

Overall, the State's inability to provide services and implement the reforms needed creates a dangerous vicious cycle. It strengthens the self-righteous arguments of others who claim they are stepping in to fill the vacuum left by the absence of the State. In turn, the activities of those individuals and groups undermine the ability of the State itself to fulfil its obligations. For many Libyans that abnormal state of affairs has become the new normal. The vicious cycle must stop.

One aspect of the action plan was the amendment to the Libyan Political Agreement. When I joined the Mission, almost all stakeholders I met requested that the matter be included in the action plan. The appointment of a new executive would have been useful, but only if chosen in an open manner that promoted national unification and strengthened the Government's ability to serve the country for the limited transition. I now believe that they have little chance of being passed. The action plan does not depend on these amendments, and certainly the closer Libya is to elections, the less relevant these amendments become. However, starting tomorrow, I shall commence a new and possibly final attempt to realize these amendments.

In my first briefing from Tripoli, I reported that there was a consistent staccato of bullets overhead. The bullets are still flying. The other day I was told that this was just normal. For the sake of the Libyan people, for

whom we in the United Nations work, we must refuse to accept this normality.

The President: I thank Mr. Salamé for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Orrenius Skau.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): In accordance with paragraph 24(e) of resolution 1970 (2011), of 26 February 2011, I have the honour to report to the Security Council on the work of the Committee established by the same resolution. The report covers the period from 18 January to 21 March 2018, during which time the Committee met once in informal consultations and conducted additional work via the written silence procedure.

During the informal consultations held on 9 February, the Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on the interim report of the Panel, prepared in accordance with resolution 2362 (2017), and discussed the recommendations contained therein.

The interim report addressed, inter alia, security-related designation criteria, the implementation of the arms embargo, the unity of State institutions and misappropriation of State funds, the prevention of illicit exports of petroleum, the implementation of the asset freeze and the travel ban. Of the eight recommendations addressed to the Committee, it agreed to take follow-up action on six and took note of one. Two recommendations are addressed to the Council. On 13 February, the Committee issued a press release on the informal consultations.

Also in connection with the Panel's interim report, which is a confidential and unpublished document, the Committee received a letter from the Coordinator of the Panel of Experts on 7 March, expressing the Panel's extreme concern regarding media reports citing, often inaccurately and out of context, excerpts from the report, as well as reproducing the content of the entire report. The Committee shares this concern. In a press release issued on 9 March, the Committee stressed the need to ensure the safety of Panel members, in accordance with paragraph 16 of resolution 2362 (2017). The Committee also reiterated its full support and appreciation for the work of the Panel and underlined the importance of that work being carried out in an unhindered manner. Upon the proposal of a Committee member, I intend to call a meeting of the Committee on this matter in the near future.

During the period under review, with respect to the arms embargo, the Committee approved one request for exemption from the arms embargo submitted under paragraph 9(c) of resolution 1970 (2011). The Committee also received a post-delivery notification from the United Nations Support Mission in Libya for previously exempted items.

Furthermore, on 16 January, the Committee received a letter from Turkey providing certain information concerning the vessel *Andromeda*, which had been seized by Greece. On 29 January, the Committee received an inspection report of the cargo from Greece, in line with paragraph 21 of resolution 2213 (2015). Containers of explosives, detonators and related materiel, as well as empty gas tanks, were found on board this vessel, which was flying the flag of Tanzania. The Committee has notified Libya of the inspection and has written to the relevant States seeking clarifications from them on the matter. Greece subsequently informed the Committee that the Panel of Experts had inspected the seized items.

In connection with the measures imposed on two vessels, the *Nadine* and the *Lynn S*, for illicitly exporting gas oil from Libya, the Committee renewed those measures for a further period of 90 days for each, based on requests received from Libya. The Committee also updated the sanctions list entry details for those vessels based on updates provided by the Panel of Experts. It further wrote a letter to the relevant States on the matter. Recently, the Committee received, through the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014), an inspection report from the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen dated 4 January 2018, on the vessel *Lynn S*.

Concerning the travel ban, the Committee approved an extension to the exemption request submitted on behalf of Mr. Sayyid Mohammed Qadhaf Al-Dam, who had been authorized to travel from Libya to Egypt on the grounds of humanitarian need. However, the Committee did not approve a request submitted on behalf of Mrs. Safia Farkash Al-Barassi that she no longer be subject to this measure. Accordingly, she remains subject to both the travel ban and the asset freeze.

The President: I thank Ambassador Orrenius Skau for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members wishing to make statements.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this meeting and the briefings we have just heard from Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), and Ambassador Carl Orrenius Skau, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of Sweden, on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya.

Peru is closely following the political and security situation in Libya. We are particularly concerned at the ongoing reports of violence in Tripoli and Benghazi and other areas of Libya, as well as the presence of terrorist groups there. We must therefore ensure the promotion of respect for human rights throughout the country, especially as concerns particularly vulnerable groups such as refugees, women and children.

Given this situation, Peru supports the efforts to implement the Libyan Political Agreement and the United Nations action plan. We believe that dialogue and commitment among the various Libyan stakeholders, supported by the mediation efforts of the Special Representative, are the only way to move towards a national transition and achieve sustainable peace. We would therefore highlight the progress made in the talks between the High Council of State and the House of Representatives, as well as the good offices of UNSMIL throughout the process. Good faith and a the spirit of understanding and cooperation must prevail among the parties.

Furthermore, we commend the Libyan people for their enthusiasm with respect to holding elections this year. More than 2 million voters had been registered by the end of January, including more than a million women, as the Special Representative stressed. We also wish to highlight the importance of the town hall meetings, open to all citizens, that have been held with the support of UNSMIL and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

It is our view that these efforts must serve to ensure that citizens are involved in and take ownership of the political process leading to the election of new national authorities, the convening of a national conference and the drafting of a new constitution. We deem important the participation of the entire Libyan political spectrum and civil society, as well as the support of the international community in this. Peru encourages greater participation on the part of women and young people at all levels of this process, and here we wish to commend the inclusion of women in the joint drafting committee and the establishment of a forum to review draft constitutional proposals from a gender perspective.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, our delegation commends the presidency of the Netherlands for placing this important topic on this morning's agenda. Moreover, we thank Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, for providing the Security Council with an excellent briefing on the situation in Libya and the progress being made in the implementation process of the United Nations action plan for Libya. We wish Mr. Salamé every success in carrying out the functions conferred upon him. We also extend our thanks to Sweden as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), concerning Libya, for the important and substantive information provided at this meeting. My delegation also thanks the Secretary-General for his 12 February report (S/2018/140) on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

Equatorial Guinea deeply regrets the current situation that the Libyan people are undergoing. On behalf of Equatorial Guinea, we convey our most sincere support and solidarity for them and our desire to see that country's ordeal come to an end. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea emphatically condemns all armed conflicts and any violation of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and demands that priority be given to protecting the most vulnerable civilians as well as all personnel providing humanitarian and health assistance in the area.

Equatorial Guinea has always advocated for dialogue as the primary means for settling conflicts with the goal of ensuring bringing about peace. We therefore acknowledge, commend and enthusiastically support the role of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya in its work as mediator and in advancing reconciliation at all levels through dialogue. We believe that that is the way to achieve the political transition for which the Libyan people have been yearning for more than seven years, during which they have been embroiled in a conflict that has resulted in the loss of many lives, including among women and children.

We also underline the role of various regional and international actors, such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the European Union, among others, for their work to reach political solutions to end the situation in Libya. Given the plight of the Libyan people, we call on the parties involved to reach an understanding and pool their efforts so as to make the Libyan Political Agreement a reality and end the protracted political transition, thereby allowing for the holding of legislative elections, which would lead to the re-establishment of peace and security in Libya — a process that we want to see take place safely, transparently, freely and democratically without any interference from external third parties.

In conclusion, we are deeply concerned about a situation marked by anarchy and insecurity and the deterioration in the humanitarian situation caused by persistent clashes among armed groups. We have also seen abductions, assassinations, the rape of women and children, arbitrary detention and torture — as has been indicated in the report of the Secretary-General — as well as the situation concerning refugees and migrants, who, according to the report (see S/2017/466) of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1973 (2011), concerning Libya, continue to be subjected to degrading treatment, abuse, human trafficking and other barbaric indignities. Faced with such unrelenting facts, we therefore urge all Council members and the entire international community to redouble their efforts to end the situation on the ground, which does not seem to have a clear end in sight.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Salamé and Ambassador Orrenius Skau for their comprehensive updates on the situation in Libya and the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), concerning Libya, respectively. We fully support the view that the solution to the situation in Libya must be solely a peaceful one and that the Libyans themselves must have ownership over the political process. The Libyan Political Agreement remains the only viable framework throughout the transitional period to end the protracted political crisis. However, we need to move from the transitional phase to permanent stability in Libya, and we believe that the following steps should be undertaken.

First, a referendum should be held to approve a new constitution, as the Supreme Court of Libya ruled in favour of the draft constitution on 14 February, thereby removing all legal obstacles.

Secondly, free and fair parliamentary and presidential elections should be held, which would mark the end of the transitional period. We fully support the observations made by the Secretary-General in his latest report on Libya (S/2019/140) that it is essential to enjoy broad political consensus concerning the elections and to encourage both participation and acceptance of the results. It is also critical that the appropriate legal framework be in place.

Thirdly, priority should be placed on the development agenda. We commend the efforts of the of the United Nations development system in drafting a strategic framework for Libya for the period from 2019 to 2020 with the active participation of humanitarian agencies, Libyan officials and civil society representatives.

Fourthly, issues concerning impunity related to migrants, the violation of their human rights and their humanitarian plight and dire situation should be addressed properly.

Moreover, we believe that international initiatives to advance political reconciliation in Libya should be consolidated under the leadership of United Nations-led efforts. It is important that the Security Council maintain unity and support the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Salamé and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. In that regard, Kazakhstan commends the active efforts of the Special Representative and encourages him to continue his engagement with a wide range of actors so as to broaden support and their commitments to the political process.

Lastly, concerning the sanctions regime, it is vital that Libya's oil resources be used for the benefit of Libyans. The smuggling of fuel continues to be a prosperous activity and generates a significant flow of income to boost local armed groups and cross-border criminal networks. In that regard, strict compliance with the embargo on the supply of arms to Libya must be reinforced.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We express our gratitude for the briefing by Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, and take this opportunity to reiterate our unwavering support

for the work that he continues to do. Likewise, we are grateful for the briefing by Ambassador Orrenius Skau, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of Sweden, on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011), concerning Libya, on the Committee's work.

It has been almost eight years since the conflict began in Libya and, given the inconceivable suffering that the Libyan people have been subjected to, the comprehensive implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement is crucially needed to definitively conclude the transition period. Accordingly, my delegation underscores the willingness to engage in dialogue and the commitment shown by the parties during the meetings of the joint drafting committee to find common ground to facilitate its effective implementation as well as to comply with the proposals set out in the United Nations action plan advanced by the Special Representative. That same notable willingness must be maintained and lead to a participatory process led by and for the Libyan people.

It is therefore necessary to promote and move forward the holding of a referendum on a new constitution that clearly defines the elements needed for electoral processes that will consolidate and bring to term the transition period and, above all, will establish the guidelines to develop the entire normative structure enabling the establishment of reliable and competent institutions upon which the State will be anchored. To that end, we believe that the progress made by the Libyan High Commission for National Elections in voter registration has been a fundamental step, with 2.5 million people registered, of whom almost half are women, at the time of the writing of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/140). In that understanding, we believe it essential to ensure the active participation of women, young people and all sectors of society in this process. We appreciate and highlight the ongoing efforts of various subregional and regional organizations, such as the African Union, and countries such as Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia, among others, to strengthen, support and advance the Libyan political process and the action plan.

Despite these positive actions, we deplore the worrying increase in violence and confrontations between the parties during the reporting period, which, according to the report of the Secretary-General, have resulted in more than 160 deaths. Likewise, the continuous reports of abductions, torture, arbitrary detentions and summary executions are disturbing, particularly in the cities of Derna and Benghazi, where clashes have also occurred and where public spaces and civil services have been identified as military targets, in clear violation of international humanitarian law. In this regard, we reiterate our call on the parties and local actors to lay down their arms and avoid any rhetoric that calls for violence as a means of achieving any objective, since these attitudes not only threaten the lives of hundreds of innocent people, but also setback and undermine the progress made so far in implementing the Libyan Political Agreement.

It is also alarming that, according to the report of the Secretary-General, irregular combatants and foreign armed groups from the Sudan and Chad are present in Libyan territory and that their activities and involvement in armed clashes in the south of the country only exacerbate the internal conflict to the detriment of the efforts being made by the Libyan people to stabilize their country. Furthermore, the threat posed by the movement of foreign terrorist fighters from Da'esh to Libya, following their defeat and expulsion from Iraq and Syria, is an imminent threat that endangers the security not only of Libya, but of the entire region, since, despite their defeat, they would still be able to coordinate attacks through covert cells and engage in arms trafficking despite the current embargo.

The situation of migrants and refugees has not improved. According to the report of the International Organization for Migration of 28 February, during that month alone 34 people were killed in attempts to cross the Mediterranean Sea, mainly from the ports of Zuwara, Tripoli and Azawiya. Unfortunately, these victims are among the more than 316 fatalities recorded so far this year. We note with concern repeated reports of violations of the rights of migrants, who are detained indefinitely in detention centres under reprehensible conditions, subjected to degrading treatment, torture, forced labour, denial of medical assistance and sexual violence. We call on the parties to prevent abuses and violations of the human rights of migrants in the centres under their control, and we recall that they must comply with their obligations under international law and guarantee respect for the rights of these persons. We reiterate once again to the Libyan authorities that they must initiate appropriate investigations to identify those responsible for these violations so that these acts do not remain unpunished.

In conclusion, we call on all parties to join in the ongoing efforts to maintain a continuous dialogue that will allow for a peaceful, orderly and inclusive political transition that responds to the interests of the Libyan people and allows them to freely and consensually define their future within the framework of their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, since there is no military solution to this conflict. We recall that the only option for resolving this conflict is through compliance with the Libyan Political Agreement, recognized by resolution 2259 (2015), and reaffirm that it must be implemented, as stated in presidential statement S/PRST/2017/26, of 14 December 2017.

The President: I wish to again remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Libya.

Mr. Elmajerbi (Libya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it is my pleasure to congratulate you, Madam President, on your delegation's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/140) on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). I would further like to express our thanks and appreciation to his Excellency Mr. Ghassan Salamé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of UNSMIL, for his important briefing on the latest developments in Libya and the extensive efforts being made to resolve the political crisis in the country. We also thank the representative of Sweden for his briefing as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya, in which he addressed the latest developments on the sanctions in Libya.

The international community has stressed its firm commitment to resolving the crisis in Libya through an inclusive political settlement embodied in the United Nations action plan adopted at the high-level meeting held in New York on 20 September 2017. The action plan is primarily based on the Libyan Political Agreement signed on 17 December 2015, which remains the sole framework for ending the conflict between Libyan parties, free from menacing rhetoric and use of force. All Libyan parties engaging in the political dialogue have committed to the Agreement, which is aimed at concluding the transitional stage and all other stages included in the United Nations action plan, and establish a strong and resilient Government to lead the country to safety and security. We highly appreciate the great efforts of Mr. Ghassan Salamé in reaching out to all parties, and underscore the vital role of the United Nations in facilitating the Libyan dialogue. We also appreciate the regional efforts that have been coordinated with those of the United Nations, especially those of the League of Arab States and the African Union towards resolving the Libyan crisis.

We warn against any intervention or unilateral initiative that could only thwart United Nations efforts and fail to resolve the Libyan crisis. We note the statement made by the President of the Presidency Council of the Government of National Accord on 17 February 2018, addressed to the Libyan people on the seventh anniversary of the revolution, with respect to the negative effect of foreign interventions in the Libyan crisis.

As for recent positive developments in the political process in Libya, and thanks to the support of the Government of National Accord and UNSMIL, the High Commission for National Elections has started registering citizens living in the country. The number of registered people is more than half of those qualified to participate in the elections. The High Commission has also started to register citizens residing in foreign countries. This is a process that remains ongoing. We hope that the House of Representatives will soon adopt an electoral law allowing the High Commission to finish the procedural work and set a date for the elections, in coordination with the House, the Presidency Council and the High Council of States. If a date is set, we hope to see all political parties accepting the results of the elections, which could lead to the reconstruction of the State and the unification and reactivation of its institutions, and to alleviating the suffering of the Libyan people.

Undoubtedly, insecurity and the proliferation of weapons are among the main challenges that the international community must address to help Libya, especially at this sensitive time. Although the security situation has improved in the capital Tripoli and its surrounding areas, thanks to the efforts of the Government of National Accord, security incidents involving the terrorizing of civilians continue to occur from time to time because of some rogue armed groups. In this regard, we stress the need to unify all military, security and law enforcement institutions.

These institutions must respect the principle of military leadership and control, pursuant to the military law, and must work under civilian leadership and proceed to the dissolution of armed groups and the collection of weapons.

It has become urgent to improve the security situation in Libya and a prerequisite for the success of any political process and for addressing all challenges, including the fight against terrorism, illicit migration and the protection of human rights. If weapons and tyrannical armed groups continue to proliferate, then security and stability in the country and the democratic civil State will not be achieved and no political solution will succeed. In this regard, there is hope that the efforts of the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt to unify the Libyan National Army will succeed. Six rounds of meetings have been held so far between the military leadership and high-ranking officers in western, eastern and southern Libya.

With respect to the economic situation, there has been a tangible increase in oil exports, which have almost reached the goal of 1.5 million barrels per day. If it were not for the security situation, the National Oil Corporation would have been able to achieve that goal by now, thereby increasing the revenue of the State, which would in turn have alleviated the economic distress and civilian suffering. However, the ongoing political schism and the presence of parallel institutions, in addition to the deterioration of the security situation as a result of fighting over resources by some greedy parties with the aim of achieving individual gains at the expense of citizens' livelihood, have contributed to the continued deterioration of the economic situation and the suffering of citizens. We stress again that all economic problems can be solved only through a unified Government of National Accord and unified sovereign institutions.

As members of the Council know, the oil and financial wealth of Libya is being looted at the national and foreign levels. Locally, oil continues to be smuggled by criminal gangs, which established that illicit trade with the aim of obtaining revenues in the millions of dollars. That is a waste of the wealth of the country and the Libyan people. We therefore commend the efforts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya and its Panel of Experts, especially in terms of the implementation of relevant Council resolutions.

Regarding the financial wealth, all Libyans must first and foremost surmount their differences and work together to serve the interests of the country. They must agree to unify their main institutions, such as the Libyan Central Bank, the National Oil Corporation and the Libyan Investment Authority, to protect the wealth of the Libyan people and future generations. Those institutions must discharge their duties as required, free of all political polarization. Ongoing disputes over these institutions could lead to a terrible disaster, the primary victim of which will be the Libyan people. We call on all parties to reach an agreement and put the interest of Libya and the Libyans first.

In conclusion, I would like to express our deep trust in the work of the Libyan sanctions committee and its Panel of Experts, in addition to their role in the protection of the wealth of the Libyan people. We also place our confidence in the efforts of the United Nations to achieve security and stability in Libya.

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked to make a statement.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I will be very brief. I would just like to inform the Council that we will be circulating something related to an item on our agenda. It is a documentary film on what is currently going on in eastern Ghouta. On the same subject, I would like to conclude my statement by reading two paragraphs from today's press.

(*spoke in English*)

> "A Russian-brokered deal has been reached to evacuate a Syrian rebel group from a town in eastern Ghouta to opposition-held north-western Syria in the first such deal in the last remaining rebel bastion near the capital, two opposition sources said on Wednesday. They said fighters from the Ahrar Al-Sham rebel group in control of the besieged town of Harasta had agreed to lay down their arms in return for safe passage to insurgent-controlled areas and an offer to be pardoned under local reconciliation terms with the authorities for those who want to stay."

This is not a Russian statement, but from Reuters. The second relevant short paragraph, from *The Independent*, in the United Kingdom, says that

> "rockets fired on a market in a Government-controlled area of Damascus killed 35 people and wounded more than 20 others, Syrian State-run

media has said. This marks one of the highest death tolls in a single attack targeting the capital."

(*spoke in Russian*)

That all relates to how resolution 2401 (2018) is being implemented — its implementation, or non-implementation, being something that many Council members here like to talk about. The film I mentioned is a documentary. It has no embellishments whatsoever. It is not a feature film, but gives us a realistic picture of what has been going on in the past few days in this enclave on the outskirts of Damascus. I hope that Council members can find the time to watch it.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8212

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8212th meeting
Thursday, 22 March 2018, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Van Oosterom	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Albanai
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Nigeria to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission; and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser, Adelphi.

Ms. Nagarajan is joining via video teleconference from Abuja.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods, I wish to encourage all participants, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are further encouraged to limit their initial remarks to the agreed time limits.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed, who is joining via video teleconference from Monrovia, and I now give her the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I wish to begin by thanking the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands and Ambassador Van Oosterom for having convened this briefing and for the really dynamic presidency of the Security Council this month. Let me also say that I wish to congratulate the Security Council, because I am here in Monrovia as we come to the closure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia tomorrow. This is really an exciting moment, although there are a lot of concerns about how we will continue to build on the gains of peace and to ensure that there is sustainable development. But the Government and the President of Liberia were very, very appreciative of the support of the United Nations and wished me to convey that to the Council.

I welcome this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Lake Chad basin. Since the last such briefing, in September 2017 (see S/PV.8047), considerable progress has been made in the fight against Boko Haram. The Multinational Joint Task Force operations have contributed to the liberation of hostages and led to many territorial gains. The Secretary-General commends the Governments of the region for their sustained efforts and increased coordination, which have been crucial. It is now key that we stabilize the areas that have been reclaimed and that we seize the opportunity to really promote sustainable development.

Unfortunately, Boko Haram continues to carry out raids, abductions and suicide bombings, as demonstrated last month by the horrific abduction of 110 schoolgirls in north-east Nigeria's Yobe state. Today, though, we are very grateful and relieved that most of those girls — 105 — have been returned to their families.

The United Nations is supporting the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in developing a stabilization, recovery and resilience strategy for the region, in line with resolution 2349 (2017). The strategy, we hope, will be launched next month in N'Djamena. In parallel, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa and the Sahel continue their efforts, in close partnership with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, to address the root causes of the crisis.

Violations of human rights continue to fuel insecurity in the Lake Chad basin. Investments and strengthening community justice mechanisms will be essential to promoting reconciliation, ensuring accountability and sustaining peace. It is also critical for counter-terrorism activities and initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism to integrate the human rights and the gender dimensions. We welcome the recruitment of the three African Union-Lake Chad Basin Commission human rights officers as part of the civilian component of the Multinational Joint Task Force. The appointment of a gender advisor for the Force is, however, needed urgently to enhance the protection of women and girls and ensure their participation in peace and development processes.

Too many girls and women across the region continue to experience sexual and gender-based

violence and other violations of their rights. Boko Haram has abducted more than 4,000 women and girls. Those who are able to return often face stigmatization by their communities. Over the past several years, the group's use of women and girls to carry out suicide attacks has increased dramatically. One reason may be the lack of women in the security sector who can check other women at checkpoints. Clearly, women's participation in efforts to promote gender equality are critical elements of our response.

Boko Haram, sadly and horrifically, used children in 135 suicide attacks in 2017, representing a fivefold increase from 2016. The international community must do more to respond to the plight of children affected by the upheaval in the region, including through support for the return of children to their communities and a more concerted effort on reintegation and rehabilitation.

The humanitarian situation in the Lake Chad basin remains complex and dire, with 10.7 million people in need of life-saving assistance and 2.3 million people — including 1.5 million children — forcibly displaced from their homes. We thank the Governments of Cameroon and Nigeria for their continued cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the framework of the tripartite agreement, and we encourage all the affected States to fully implement the 2016 Abuja Action Statement.

Humanitarian assistance has scaled up considerably and reached more than 6 million people in 2017. Food security has improved in the north-east of Nigeria, where famine was averted last year. But that progress is still very fragile. As of today, 4.5 million people are severely food insecure across the Lake Chad basin, and that number is expected to rise to 5.8 million by June.

The scale-up of assistance has taken place in an extremely volatile environment. On 1 March, three aid workers were killed in the town of Rann, in Borno state, following an attack by suspected Boko Haram insurgent. Three others are still missing, and humanitarian aid has temporarily been suspended. An estimated $1.6 billion will be required to assist 7.8 million people in four countries. I call on Member States to ensure that the humanitarian appeal is well funded and that the pledges are disbursed promptly. The experience of the last appeal was successful. It was very much appreciated, it came in time and it has been well disbursed.

I would also like to highlight the importance of strengthening the Safe Schools initiative, as well as communications infrastructure, so that people can call for assistance when needed. This was a major gap in the recent abduction of the 110 girls in Yobe state. The crisis has resulted in massive destruction of basic infrastructure, health and educational facilities, commercial buildings, private houses and agricultural assets. Along with the impacts of violent extremism, underdevelopment, demographic shifts and climate change, we can see another powerful example of a complex, multidimensional situation that really requires an integrated approach to addressing the humanitarian and development challenges that will link to sustainable peace.

The United Nations continues to support the affected Governments in creating livelihoods, strengthening institutions, building community resilience and taking other steps to address the root causes. National and local non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations still have an invaluable role to play in prevention and reintegration efforts.

Restoring the Lake Chad ecosystem is going to be essential. It would improve livelihoods for millions of people, reduce local tensions and foster regional integration and development. Last month's international conference on Lake Chad in Abuja was successful, and the adoption of the Abjua declaration reaffirmed the region's commitment to increasing cooperation to address the socioeconomic impact of climate change and instability in the Sahel, West Africa and the Lake Chad region.

Finally, the Security Council's visit to the region over a year ago should not be underestimated, and the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) really created a momentum that must be maintained. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council in July 2017 further highlighted the challenges faced by the Multinational Joint Task Force. Sustained international, financial and technical support for the Force remains crucial to protecting the fragile progress made in the fight against Boko Haram. The joint ECCAS-ECOWAS summit on Boko Haram — the first to be held in the first half of 2018 — will be another important undertaking. We must continue to address these complex challenges, in close cooperation with the affected countries and all relevant subregional organizations, in line resolution 2349 (2017).

We should also recognize that security measures and military operations have proven limits. There will be no sustaining peace without sustainable development, and development gains will always be at risk without lasting peace. I hope that we can work together to end this crisis, which has caused immense suffering and continues to have serious consequences well beyond the borders.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bila.

Mr. Bila: My name is Mohammed Bila. I am a remote sensing expert in the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in N'Djamena. I have been working in the Komadugu-Yobe basin in Nigeria since 1990 as a hydrologist at the Federal Ministry of Water Resources in Abuja. I have been in the service of the Lake Chad Basin Commission since April 2002.

My briefing today is going to focus on climate variability and its impact on the vulnerability of the Lake Chad basin, and on what the United Nations can do to reduce the general vulnerability of the region. To help in understanding the situation, I will share my experience from a community that survives on cultivating the lake floor and then on four communities that used to depend on the shoreline of the Lake Chad but are now 10 kilometres away from the lake and depend on sharing the river Komadugu-Yobe for their livelihood.

The years 1983 and 1984 proved to be the driest in Borno in recent history. The minor tributaries of Lake Chad — the rivers Yobe, Yedseram and the El Beid — were dry and the level of Lake Chad fell three metres below the critical level for the pumping station at Kirinowa. Consequently, the South Chad Irrigation Project (SCIP) could not irrigate any land from 1984 to 1986. The lake floor became a refuge and offered an opportunity to farm workers from the South Chad Irrigation Project to cultivate beans and maize. In 1985, there were 25,000 people living in 49 villages along the western portion of Lake Chad in Nigeria. In 2010, the population in the central part of the north basin was estimated to be 56,421, living in 387 villages on the lake floor. Lake-floor cultivation of crops using the residual soil moisture, which began around 1985 or 1986, is one of the methods of adaptation to drought and deprivation for the communities around Lake Chad.

One of the villages located near the border tripoint marker between the Niger, Nigeria and Chad is Kaukiri. In 2010, there was an estimated population of 1,425 of largely lake-floor farmers of beans and maize in the village. The local produce market brings together farmers, livestock herders and traders from all three countries. In July 2010, when I was on a mission, the traditional chief reported that for the previous three years, the usual recession moisture farming could not take place because the Komadugu-Yobe river did not bring water to the farmlands around Kaukiri. There was no evidence that those three years of failure in agriculture and loss of livelihood for all island villages around Kaukiri were noticed or supported by local authorities or local community-based organizations. As of today, no authority can detect if a similar disaster is occurring because there is only one water-level measurement station in the whole 25,000 square kilometres of Lake Chad's old shoreline, located in Bol, Chad. In general, the environmental monitoring network in the Lake Chad basin is inadequate, sparse and poorly funded and operated.

Malam Fatori and Kaniram, in Nigeria, and Bosso and Mamouri, in the Niger, are riparian settlements of the Komadugu-Yobe river, which forms the border between the Niger and Nigeria. Prior to the Sahel droughts, all four settlements were located on the Lake Chad shoreline, but the shrinking of Lake Chad has reduced the communities to competing for the seasonal flow of the Komadugu-Yobe river for dry-season agriculture. The competition for the river has led to claims and counterclaims of river diversion by the communities on both sides of the border, and the loss of livelihoods may have led to the build-up of social tension among young people prior to the outbreak of the insurgency in 2012. While the Niger-Nigerian mixed commission has established a mechanism for consultations on the development of new water abstraction at the national level to prevent a further build-up of social tension, similar cross-border cooperation in local water governance could help with conflict management and the reduction of social tension among young people.

Those examples are two of the possibly many incidences that occur across the Lake Chad basin region that are not noticed on the national level because our national water-governance mechanism is not structured to capture such information or respond to it. Equally, at the regional and global levels, climate variability and

its impact on the loss of livelihood were not noticed due to deficiencies at the lower levels of water governance.

An obvious solution to the poor water management that has led to the loss of livelihoods and the rising tensions is to restructure the water governance mechanism to operate in a participatory manner at the local level, with input from resource user groups. User-group capacities should include resource monitoring and reporting as a concurrent activity associated with resource exploitation.

At the regional level, the solution must acknowledge the link between local environmental degradation and the recurrent Sahel drought. The environmental challenges facing the Lake Chad basin are connected to the challenges of climate change faced by the Sahel region of Africa. The Sahel is increasingly facing extreme variability of climate resulting in frequent droughts, short-duration, high-intensity rainfall, desertification, water scarcity, land degradation and ultimately, food insecurity. Consequently, addressing the climatic root causes of local challenges through risk assessment and management will require a similar solution at the Sahel regional level.

Future threats linked to climate risks will continue to exist in the Lake Chad basin and other regions of the world currently facing fragility related to climate risks. The Security Council is unique in its position not only to stop current conflicts, but also to prevent future conflict through climate diplomacy, based on early warning and risk assessment reports by other United Nations agencies in the field.

Over the past two weeks, the Lake Chad Basin Commission has participated in an integrated joint mission with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, researchers and development partners coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme to the Lac region of the Republic of Chad. During the mission, we were informed that in the Lac region, there are 120 polders that could be developed for year-round agriculture. We saw how women's community-based organizations are using the polders for vegetable gardens, and we heard the young people's request for dams to be built as a management mechanism to exploit more of those polders. Such community-based organizations could be created around each polder or resource user group and provided with the requisite training and equipment to monitor and report the water level to supplement the lack of information at the national and regional levels.

National and local-level information and assessment could be aggregated annually by the United Nations country teams and then integrated in the reporting of the regular briefings delivered by the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). Global-level early warning could be issued by the Security Council as the need arises to serve as a basis for measures integrating climate adaptation, cooperation in water governance, conflict prevention and management, enhancing livelihood resilience and global security. I have three recommendations for the Security Council.

First, a participatory system of local water governance should be introduced into the Lake Chad basin as a priority. Secondly, climate-security risk assessment and reporting from the conflict affected zones of the Sahel and the Lake Chad basin should be included in the regular briefings given by UNOWAS and UNOCA to the Security Council. Thirdly, in view of the projection of continuing global warming within conflict-affected regions, climate-security risk assessment and reporting from the local, national and regional levels should be aggregated and presented to the Security Council to serve as early warning for conflict-prevention advice to United Nations Members and for integrating climate adaptation, cooperation in water governance, conflict prevention and management, enhancing livelihood resilience and the global security of the planet.

The President: I thank Mr. Bila for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Nagarajan.

Ms. Nagarajan: I thank the Kingdom of the Netherlands for inviting me to participate in this briefing as its presides over the Council this month. I also thank my fellow briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Mr. Mohammed Bila of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

This year marks 15 years since the start of the violence we identify with armed groups in Lake Chad region. I will focus my briefing on current conflict dynamics, potential trajectories and the need to prevent the root causes of future conflicts. I was born and lived in Maiduguri. I have been working on conflict analysis, human rights, peacebuilding and protection for the

past 12 years. I will talk about the region as a whole, but given my background I will draw a great deal on Nigeria. I will talk about four sets of dynamics.

The first revolves around environmental and climate factors. The problem is not the alleged shrinking of Lake Chad, but rather, as just presented by my colleague, Mohammed Bila, increased variability. Lake Chad has fluctuated throughout history. Communities adapt to the changes, although, recently, coping mechanisms have been tested. The issue is rather that of the governance of and access to natural resources, the impact of insecurity and increased climate variability. Farmers with whom I spoke complained of the impacts of changing lake levels and increased rainfall variability, and said that that causes their inability to plant properly, lower or no crop yields, and insects that do not die because there is no rain. Pastoralists have had to change grazing routes. Fishermen talk of changing amounts of fish in water bodies. We are seeing, above all, decreased resilience owing to conflict and climate.

In December 2017, one Nigerian farmer told me how he used to farm by relying on the rainy season, the lake or a stream for irrigation in any given year. He said that if any one of them were insufficient in any given year, that was okay, as all three disasters would not occur at the same time. However, he said that now, owing to the crisis, every avenue to develop oneself economically has been destroyed. One does not have the money, and even if one did and failed — which is likely because of the lack of rainfall, security restrictions and Boko Haram — one cannot do the others. Virtually all economic activities have collapsed.

Secondly, we also see tensions among and within occupational groups. The conflict among and within the groups of farmers, pastoralists, fishermen and hunters has been exacerbated by a decrease in arable land. Planting crops on grazing routes and areas, changing movements of pastoralists, changing rainfall patterns affecting crop yields and cattle health, military restrictions, security concerns and an insufficiency of land and water result in an increase of population density owing to displacement. Moreover the conflict has led to increased ethnic and social tensions because of the economic impact in all four countries.

Thirdly, firewood collection by civilians and the cutting down of trees by the military are increasing deforestation. That, as well as agricultural burning of the vaster region, has not only a current impact on protection and security, but also entails future ramifications related to soil degradation, desertification, agricultural livelihoods and the availability of wood for smoking fish. There have been no clear empirical links made between those changes and recruitment into armed opposition groups, but those impacts on livelihoods and increasing inequality are natural incentives to join such groups, while they are happening in the same space. There may well be a link.

The second dynamic that I will talk about is the gendered nature of violence. Men and older boys are often the first to flee insecure areas. They are deliberately targeted, killed and forcibly recruited by armed groups. They are viewed with suspicion, arrested and detained by security agencies, and they are involved in fighting, thereby leaving women of all ages, as well as girls, younger boys and older men, struggling to cope. At the same time, with the increasing level of crime directed against women and girls, from their abduction from schools, which we have seen in international headlines to their use as human detonative explosives or so-called suicide bombers. We also see higher levels of early and forced marriage either to fighters or due to familial pressures owing to a lack of resources, sexual exploitation, abuse and violence, including by those who are supposed to protect and not exploit them, and survival sex.

People with disabilities are also disproportionately affected. They are unable to escape violence and struggle to cope when they are displaced. Unknown numbers of people have also acquired disabilities because of the violence. Their experiences have led many to struggle with their trauma. What does that mean for the long-term when many men are missing, thereby leaving the women to cope without them; when many women have suffered violence and trauma; and when all children and young people have either taken part in or experienced violence?

The third dynamic that I will talk about concerns tensions among internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, returnees and host communities. The people of the region have been extraordinarily generous in sheltering and assisting those displaced, which began long before the humanitarian community showed up. With time, that dynamic has given rise to some tensions. For example, together with Mohammed Bila, I was in Baga Sola in Chad two weeks ago. There, Nigerian fishermen feel discriminated against with regard to access to information and services as they

cannot speak the local languages. Those tensions are unfortunately exacerbated by humanitarian assistance as it is seen as benefiting only IDPs despite the violence affecting everyone.

The fourth dynamic concerns governance and providing security. The region has long suffered from weak Government and certain State services or their absence, which has been worsened by the conflict. There is also dissatisfaction with community leaders. Before the crisis, they were viewed at times as politicized and corrupt, and they are now increasingly seen as diverting aid for themselves and their families. Moreover, we know that corruption and inequality are root causes of conflict, and people believe that those have worsened. Providing security is also problematic. Military action or inaction has caused harm to civilians through, first, failure to protect communities from violence; secondly, failure to prevent collateral damage during operations; and, thirdly, the direct targeting of civilians with human rights abuses.

I do not underestimate the scale of challenges facing the militaries of the region, and we have seen some positive developments. For example, in Nigeria a national policy on civilian protection is currently awaiting President Buhari's signature, and the military is trying to further institutionalize civilian protection and harm mitigation into their training. However, civilian harm continues, thereby increasing unhappiness and frustration with the State. There are also issues concerning community militias originally set up to protect civilian populations. In Nigeria, there are increasing concerns about the yan gora, or Civilian Joint Task Force, in particular. People say that they intimidate, settle scores, trade drugs, extort, steal, divert aid and sexually harass, exploit and abuse. People are worried that that increasing politicization, electoral mobilization, levels of criminality and the number gangs will lead to a new conflict phase.

Although we hope that peace will return soon, I will now outline for the Council three ways in which the conflict might further develop.

First, the group headed by Shekau may be defeated, but the group headed by Abu Al-Barnawi may grow stronger and more difficult to combat because avoiding civilian harm means that it might be able to retain its own fighters and also ensure more strategic relations with the local populations.

The second scenario is that community militias, owing to incomplete and ineffective processes of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, form the next phase of the conflict, whereby engaging in criminality escalates into sustained violence against civilian populations and, perhaps, the State.

The third scenario is that intercommunal tensions, coupled with reprisal attacks and decreased access to resources, as people are living in increasingly crowded spaces, lead to the formation of identity-based community militias, thereby resulting in clashes and violence. Let us also remember the upcoming elections to be held in Cameroon in October and in Nigeria in February 2019. It is important that political contestations do not affect and are not affected by those unknowns.

What are therefore the pathways to peace? First of all, the crisis is not over. Unfortunately, humanitarian needs continue. Funding and support for humanitarian action are essential. We must also pay attention to current conflict dynamics and trajectories.

The Lake Chad region needs to be on the Security Council's agenda. The Council needs more systematic reports that are conflict-, climate- and gender-sensitive from the Secretariat, including on root causes and conflict drivers, as well as more regular situational briefings to ensure that the Council is attuned to changing conflict dynamics in a volatile region.

Secondly, we need proper analysis on which to base policy and programme decisions. There may be humanitarian needs assessments that are sufficient for the humanitarian community, but proper integrated analysis that links conflict, climate, gender and social inclusion is lacking. That does not mean we should do nothing while awaiting the analysis, but we must ensure that inspections are meaningful, do no harm and are responsive to the situation.

That brings me to my third and final point. The United Nations, donors and affected States must ensure that every cypher, naira, euro, pound and dollar spent in the region from now on is context-sensitive and covers climate, conflict, gender and social inclusion and that the impact of interventions against those factors is monitored. For example, a livelihoods programme must look at future rainfall trajectories to see which crops would remain viable in future. If it supports the polder system in Chad, it must consider who will and

will not have access to the increased areas of fertile land that would bring about and how that would play into existing tensions. Otherwise, interventions will not lead to sustainable change and improvement in the lives of the people in the Lake Chad basin region.

Even worse than a bad situation is hope for change only for the optimism to turn to ashes. A few weeks ago, I met a young former member of the Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah. She joined the group to make society better. She told me that she thought society would have improved while she was away but when she returned, she saw that society had become worse. Looking back 15 to 20 years ago, we can see the genesis of where we are today. For most people, circumstances have greatly deteriorated. The question is: Did the previous situation lead to the current conflict and crisis? Is the current situation is worse than the previous one and, if so, what does that mean for the future?

I urge the members of the Security Council to take action now so as to prevent the current conflict dynamics from becoming the root causes of future conflicts.

The President: I thank Ms. Nagarajan for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to thank you, Sir, and your delegation for organizing today's briefing and for giving us the opportunity to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin one year after we in the Council visited the region and adopted resolution 2349 (2017), which was unique in its comprehensive approach, integrating development, human rights and security.

I would also like to thank our briefers today for their reflections on the humanitarian and security situations and for their suggestions on the next steps to address the root causes of the conflict. They have already made a number of concrete proposals and I hope that careful note of them has been taken by the Secretariat. We look forward to discussing some of those ideas later with other Member States.

The security situation in the Lake Chad basin continues to be of great concern. On 2 March, the Council condemned the attack on humanitarian workers in Rann and another in Dapchi, in which a large number of schoolgirls were abducted.

The humanitarian crisis remains as dire as when we visited the region a year ago. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance remains at 10.7 million, and 5.8 million people are now experiencing severe food insecurity. We call upon donors to maintain the momentum of the response, including by fulfilling the financial requirement of $1.6 billion for 2018. We call on all parties to the conflict to grant safe, timely and unimpeded access to humanitarian organizations, in line with international humanitarian law.

Based on the humanitarian and security situations, it is clear that the international community and the Security Council must remain fully engaged in the crisis. On 21 March, the United Kingdom opened a diplomatic office in Chad to facilitate efforts to stabilize the region and address the root causes of insecurity.

We welcome the steps taken by the Governments of the region through the Multinational Joint Task Force to address the terrorist threat. I welcome the presence of the representative of Nigeria at the table. I take this opportunity to acknowledge his country's determination and leadership in fighting terrorism and to salute the partnership that the United Kingdom and Nigeria have formed on this and other vital issues.

Although the military approach has an important role to play in stabilizing the region, the solution to the crisis cannot be solely military. As recognized in resolution 2349 (2017), to achieve sustainable peace it is vital that the root causes of regional instability, including poverty, climate change, inequality and violent extremism, be understood and addressed. We recognize the ongoing efforts of the countries of the region, both individually and jointly, through the Lake Chad Basin Commission to achieve that aim. We must ensure that Governments of the region demonstrate strong leadership, in particular on the demobilization, deradicalization and reintegration of former combatants. The international community and we in the United Nations must support those efforts with robust strategies on prevention and a sustaining peace approach.

The Deputy Secretary-General has shown great leadership in bringing together the diffuse activities of many United Nations development agencies in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, linked to wider security efforts. We must apply those lessons and that approach to the Lake Chad basin region. Special, political missions, in particular the United

Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) must work to ensure that their efforts are coherent and that regional strategies are mutually supported. I fully agree with the representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, who stated that a comprehensive analysis should be included in the future briefings of UNOCA and UNOWAS to the Council. The United Nations strategy must be based on accurate information so that future crises can be predicted and the Council, the wider United Nations family and Governments of the region can take preventive action in line with the Secretary-General's own focus on prevention.

On this World Water Day, let us remember that climate and ecological changes are a major root cause of the conflict. If we want to build sustainable peace and promote sustainable development, we must support efforts to build livelihoods that are resistant to climate change, including through adequate risk assessments and risk-management strategies. It is also vital that the United Nations and Governments of the region take the particular concerns of women and children into account in stabilization, conflict-resolution and peacebuilding efforts, in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000). The United Nations could support it through a stronger, more consistent in-country presence.

As the representative of the United Kingdom stated when we adopted resolution 2349 (2017), "[w]e will fail the people of the region if we do not respond to what we saw" (*S/PV.7911, p.5*). When we travelled to the region, we saw the root causes and the serious consequences of the conflict and we must respond. The Lake Chad basin is a region that requires a sustaining peace approach and we would hope that the Secretary-General will be able to demonstrate the support of the United Nations by visiting the region, as set out in resolution 2349 (2017).

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): As an observer State of the African Union, Kazakhstan commends the Kingdom of the Netherlands for selecting a very timely and critical issue for consideration during its presidency of the Security Council this month. We look forward to a discussion that results in greater awareness and action.

We also thank our briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, Mr. Bila; and Senior Conflict Adviser at Adelphi, Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their updates. We also welcome the delegation of Nigeria to the Chamber today.

The humanitarian situation across the Lake Chad region is presently one of most severe in the world. This year approximately 10.7 million people are in need of relief assistance and persistent insecurity and violence continue to drive displacements in higher proportions. In addition, approximately 4.5 million people are currently food insecure. We therefore call on the international community to increase its support for humanitarian assistance in the affected countries. Sustained humanitarian efforts must be accompanied and reinforced by support for recovery and increased development efforts.

The worsening ecological situation in the region also has a deep impact on its socioeconomic prospects. It is estimated that 40 million people depend on Lake Chad for crop and livestock farming, fishing and trade. Over the past 60 years, the size of Lake Chad has decreased by 95 per cent as a result of the consequences of an extended drought and climate change, affecting both the ecosystems and the economy of the region. Consequently, unemployed youth fall prey to the extremist group Boko Haram.

Along with the efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) to address security issues, it is urgent that international partners and donors support projects such the Inter Basin Water Transfer, aimed at restoring Lake Chad. Such a measure would foster not only regional integration but also development. We commend the Government of Nigeria and the Commission for hosting the international conference on saving Lake Chad, held in Abuja last month. We emphasize the importance of the United Nations continuing to carry out risk assessments of climate-related security challenges, when appropriate, and to highlight the need to implement the relevant Security Council documents to mitigate the surge.

On the security front, we strongly condemn the attacks on the civilian population by Boko Haram insurgents, especially the abduction of children, women and girls for sexual exploitation and for the purpose of suicide bombing. Commendable results have been achieved by the Multinational Joint Task Force in reducing the operational capacities and the geographical reach of Boko Haram. Likewise, it is critical to continue to strengthen the partnership among regional countries through the Joint Steering Committee

of the LCBC and the African Union with a view to also mobilizing support for the urgent operational needs of the Task Force.

However, United Nations support and engagement in regional issues are vital. We note the efforts of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel, as well as for Central Africa, to enhance coordination and the support of regional partners, with a focus on joint support for the LCBC and on combating Boko Haram in addition to other areas of cooperation.

We would like to stress the importance of strengthening the nexus between security and development as the bedrock of the stabilization, reconciliation and development of the Lake Chad region. We also firmly believe that the United Nations and regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States, should develop a single and comprehensive operational strategy that addresses the root causes of the crisis. Such a strategy should be implemented in close cooperation with the affected countries. We therefore welcome the holding of the first regional stabilization conference in the Lake Chad Basin region as an initial step towards that purpose.

As proved time and again, in conflict situations a regional approach is one of the most effective ways to move forward. We therefore commend the measures of the United Nations and the African Union, together with other international organizations and Governments, to introduce peace initiatives in the Lake Chad basin region. That in turn requires a synthesis between bottom-up and top-down strategies to bring about a true and lasting transformation.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, and Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their significant briefings on the most recent developments in the Lake Chad basin region. I would also like to commend the Kingdom of Netherlands for the choice of today's topic, which draws our attention to the various challenges faced by the Lake Chad basin and their direct and indirect consequences for the countries of the region. In my statement, I will focus on three challenges, namely, security and humanitarian and environmental challenges.

First, with regard to terrorism and security challenges, the countries of the Lake Chad basin — in particular Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria — have been targeted by terrorist attacks, including those of Boko Haram and what is known as Da'esh. Such attacks have led to the deaths of unarmed civilians and other innocent people, which is a great source of concern. We need to step up regional and international efforts to combat that dangerous phenomenon, and to cut off the sources of financing to those terrorist groups.

We welcome the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force to combat the extremist terrorist groups and to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In that regard, it is important to mention the two presidential statements adopted by the Security Council in January 2017 (S/PRST/2017/2) and July 2017 (S/PRST/2017/10), which emphasize the importance of fighting transnational threats that undermine peace and security. The presidential statements also recall the importance of implementing the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and of strengthening good governance and the rule of law.

Secondly, the humanitarian situation in certain countries of the region is considered the second worst humanitarian crisis that has been recorded, with approximately 10.8 million people who require immediate humanitarian aid. Approximately 2.4 million people, including women and children, have been internally displaced. It is therefore essential to deal with the causes of the suffering and to pool international efforts and the work of regional organizations to strengthen the stability of the region and its people, along with those responsible for terrorist acts to be held accountable in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017), on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, adopted on 31 March 2017.

During their visit to the Lake Chad basin, the members of the Security Council had an opportunity to see the scope of the humanitarian disaster in some countries of the region. The Council should benefit from the visit and periodically review the very serious humanitarian situation facing those countries before it deteriorates even further. It would then be even more difficult to contain it at the international level, let alone at the regional level.

Thirdly, with regard to environmental challenges facing the region, resolution 2349 (2017) also emphasizes the need to address the root causes of climate challenge in the region and to increase international participation in order to reduce the negative effects of climate and environmental changes, including the scarcity of water, drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity. In that regard, we note the need to reassess risks and define new and serious strategies in order to assist the Governments of the region. The Governments concerned and the United Nations must extensively assess climate risks, contain their impact and minimize adverse effects of climate and environmental changes, so as to ensure stability in the region and to ease the humanitarian suffering of its people.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm the need for the Security Council to continue to examine humanitarian suffering in some countries of Lake Chad basin, with a view to improving the living conditions of the peoples facing humanitarian, security and climate challenges and minimize their risks. In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Republic of Nigeria to address those challenges.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her briefing and her leadership. I am happy to note that Ambassador Skoog is with Amina in Monrovia to celebrate this important moment in the history of the country and to discuss how to support the priorities of the new Government in his capacity as the Peacebuilding Commission Chair for Liberia. Let me also thank Mr. Mohammed Bila of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for sharing their important perspectives from the ground this morning.

It is with a deep sigh of relief that we welcome the safe return of more than 100 of the girls captured by Boko Haram in the Nigerian town of Dapchi. I reiterate our strong demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining missing girls. Rehabilitation opportunities for children and their mothers, including the sensitization of communities to avoid stigmatization and to facilitate return, continue to be of the utmost importance in our ongoing efforts to address the situation.

National, regional and international efforts to mitigate the consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency and to step up humanitarian action in 2017 meant that we could successfully avert the immediate risk of famine. In that connection, we recognize the important efforts by the Multinational Joint Task Force and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. However, one year after our visit to the region and the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017), the situation remains one of the most fragile in the world. Continued international support and attention to this complex crisis is crucial.

Vast development needs in the region persist. Chronic poverty, the lack of economic opportunities and violations of human rights are all factors of instability. We need a continued focus on sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as on the empowerment of women.

Effective partnerships spanning the humanitarian, reconstruction and development nexus that combine short- and long-term responses are needed to support sustainable peace. In order to address the structural causes of the crisis, complementarity and cooperation must be sought with a multitude of actors, including national Governments, regional organizations and international financial institutions.

As part of the efforts to implement resolution 2349 (2017), Sweden is actively supporting the organization of the Lake Chad governors' forum on peacebuilding, prevention, stabilization and regional cooperation, due to take place in Maiduguri in May. The forum should contribute to the process of developing a regional stabilization strategy. Those efforts will also support coherence, coordination and cross-border collaboration by creating a forum for recurrent dialogue among governors from affected States and by conducting consultations with communities — including religious leaders and women representatives — on the challenges facing people living in the Lake Chad basin region.

In the light of today's focus on root causes, I wish to highlight two points in particular.

First, the negative impacts of climate change on the stability and security of the Lake Chad basin region have been clearly recognized by the Council — in resolution 2349 (2017) and in the January presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3) on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Climate change constitutes both a direct challenge and a threat multiplier, contributing to polarization and conflict between groups by worsening existing fragility factors, such as scarce resources, marginalization and the disruption of livelihoods.

As we have heard today, the Security Council has repeatedly emphasized the need for adequate capacity for risk assessments by the United Nations in that regard. We need to find ways to bring together existing information from relevant United Nations organs, including at the country level, and involve research institutions to provide forward-looking analysis for United Nations decision-making bodies, including for the Security Council. We invite the Secretary-General to take forward those Council requests forward. We stand ready to support any efforts in that regard. Conflict prevention efforts would be more effective if the climate and environmental stress put on societies is properly understood and addressed. Implementing the sustaining peace agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is, of course, a central part of those efforts.

Secondly, engaging all relevant actors, not least at the local level, in an inclusive dialogue on root causes is crucial. Community engagement is also a prerequisite for effective early-warning systems. In particular, women's full and equal representation and effective participation is critical in reconstruction and stabilization efforts, as they are often disproportionately affected by the crisis and play multiple roles in society. With greater influence for women in the design and implementation of policies and programmes, these will be better adapted to realities on the ground, thereby creating better conditions for long-term stability and peace.

Finally, we look forward to continuing to engage in discussions on the implementation of resolution 2349 (2017), including within the regular reporting by UNOWAS and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa. We encourage the Secretary-General to undertake a joint visit to the region with the World Bank, the African Union and the African Development Bank, as was encouraged in the resolution. I also agree with the United Kingdom that proposals put forward this morning by the briefers should be considered and taken forward. The Peacebuilding Commission could also be well placed in this regard, while drawing on its unique membership and a mandate to address root causes and take regional approaches. Continuous international attention to the Lake Chad basin region will be needed in order to find ways to address the multiple and interdependent challenges in a coherent manner, in the short-term as well as the long-term.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful to the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for the timely convening of this meeting on this special occasion as we celebrate World Water Day, a vital element for the well-being of human beings and the promotion of their economic and social development. We are also grateful to Ms. Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for their briefings.

Peru continues to be particularly concerned about the crisis in the Lake Chad basin, which affects more than 17 million people in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. Approximately 11 million people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance. We must also condemn and confront the terrorist violence of Boko Haram and Da'esh, and prevent the occurrence of major conflicts by addressing their root causes. That requires the timely promotion of socioeconomic development and the mitigation of the effects of climate change and environmental change. These effects involve water scarcity, which in turn has created chronic drought, desertification, land degradation, extreme poverty and food insecurity in the Lake Chad region. The situation highlights the interrelationship between security, development and human rights.

Building sustainable peace requires a coherent and comprehensive response, with a broad, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder approach. The United Nations system has the capacity to contribute to more effective responses through its relevant agencies, funds and programmes. The Security Council, the main body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, can and should benefit from a better understanding of the factors behind the crisis and conflict and the tools needed to address them. That should be done through timely situation analysis and development, risk assessments and risk-management strategies, as well as early-warning analysis and coordinated early-response mechanisms and the creation of integrated strategies aimed at preventing a recurrence of conflict. We welcome the efforts in that regard of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and regional and subregional organizations, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. We encourage them to increase their support to the Governments of the States of the Lake Chad region

around a holistic regional strategy designed to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.

That strategy should go beyond an urgent short-term military response and focus on long-term sustainable development focused on ensuring human dignity. That includes eradicating poverty and vulnerability to the negative effects of climate change. It also means creating jobs, especially for young people, and access to education, and strengthening Government institutions. In that context, we welcome the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan for north-eastern Nigeria.

In conclusion, we would like to point out the importance of ensuring that UNOWAS and UNOCA reports include special sections on the problems in Lake Chad and on their joint work. We would also like to stress the importance of adopting a gender perspective in investigations and data collection, with a view to proposing specific policies and programmes aimed at sustaining peace in the Lake Chad region.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, China commends the initiative you have taken as President of the Security Council to convene today's open meeting. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, for their briefings.

In recent years we have seen African countries standing united and making concerted efforts to strengthen themselves, finding African solutions to African issues and developing more robust collective security mechanisms for the region. They have thereby not only strongly defended Africa's peace and security but have also contributed significantly to international peace and security. China applauds those efforts.

Meanwhile, Africa continues to face challenges to peace and security. In certain regions, including the Lake Chad basin, terrorist and violent extremist activities are still rampant. Transnational organized crimes such as drug smuggling and human trafficking continue to endanger the safety of the African people. As a result, the countries affected are suffering the effects of sluggish economic growth, along with persistent serious unemployment, poverty and refugee issues. It is therefore imperative that the international community take concrete measures to help Africa build its capacity to ensure peace and security.

First, the international community must firmly support Africa in its fight against the terrorist threats. Counter-terrorism in Africa is an integral part of the global counter-terrorism effort. The international community must uphold common counter-terrorism standards and support Africa's anti-terrorism efforts. The United Nations must provide tangible assistance to African countries in their anti-terrorism capacity-building so that their counter-terrorism efforts are more effective. China commends the fact that the countries of the Lake Chad basin and the Sahel have assumed ownership of the issue and have been working jointly for peace by actively combating regional terrorist threats. While maintaining respect for the sovereignty and wishes of host countries, the United Nations and the international community should provide targeted assistance to countries of the region in areas such as technology, training, equipment, logistics and financial support.

Secondly, we should give Africa effective assistance in addressing the root causes of conflict. The continent's hotspot issues are a mass of intertwined national, ethnic, religious and social issues. African countries have two big jobs to do — maintaining peace and security, on the one hand, and promoting revitalization and development, on the other, and to do that they must address both the root causes and the symptoms. While it is important to resolve the ongoing peace and security challenges, it is even more important to address their root causes from a long-term perspective. This means in particular that support and assistance should be provided to African countries, including those in the Lake Chad basin, in their efforts to reduce poverty and increase employment, with the aim of improving economic and social development levels, delivering a tangible peace dividend to their peoples, and rooting out breeding grounds of conflict and extremism.

Thirdly, the unique role of regional organizations should be actively brought to bear. The African Union (AU) and other regional and subregional organizations in Africa have an intimate knowledge of regional and national realities and have long been mediating complex regional hotspot issues, leveraging their unique geographic, historical and cultural advantages. It is therefore important to ensure that the international community fully respects African countries' ownership in resolving their own security concerns, deepens coordination with countries in the Lake Chad basin and regional and subregional organizations such as

the AU, the Economic Community of West African States and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and enhances cooperation with them in areas such as conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction.

China and Africa are a community with a shared future, as well as a community of shared interests and win-win cooperation Strengthening solidarity and cooperation with African countries remains a key foundation of China's foreign policy. As a good friend, brother and partner of the continent, China will continue to act on the principles of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith that guide China's Africa policy, as well as on the values of friendship, justice and shared interests, both articulated by President Xi Jinping, and it will firmly support Africa's peace and development efforts. In September, China will host a Beijing summit forum on China-Africa cooperation, focusing on China and Africa's joint efforts to build the Belt and Road Initiative and on the China-Africa Community of a Shared Future. We will work hard to ensure that the Belt and Road Initiative is aligned with the development strategies of African countries, the AU's Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so as to create greater benefits for the peoples of Africa and bring peace, stability and development to the African continent as soon as possible.

Last but not least, I would like to stress that as always, China will continue to stand together with all the developing countries of Africa. We will always be sincere friends and reliable partners of Africa.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking the Netherlands for taking the initiative to organize this vital debate on the relationship between water and peace and security in the Lake Chad region, which is a very high priority for France. I warmly thank Amina Mohammed, the Deputy Secretary-General; Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission; and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, the representative of Adelphi, for their very important and enlightening briefings. I am also pleased to welcome the representative of Nigeria.

The development of the Lake Chad region requires first and foremost a focus on security, which is an essential, if not sufficient, prerequisite for development. France therefore actively supports the efforts of the countries of the Lake Chad basin region, united in the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram. Their joint efforts have made it possible to gain ground and to record major gains against that terrorist organization.

Nevertheless, the terrorist threat continues to loom over the countries of the region and their peoples, as shown by the tragic toll taken by the many attacks carried out during recent months against both civilians and security forces. We were deeply shocked by the kidnapping of 110 schoolgirls in Dapchi last month, but were pleased to hear this week that a large number of them had been released. We also condemn yesterday's attack on Nigerian soldiers in the Birnin Guari region. But these, unfortunately, are but a few examples. We also denounce in the strongest terms the grave human rights violations committed against children, particularly their recruitment as child soldiers and their use as human bombs, which could constitute crimes under the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Faced with the persistent, ever-changing terrorist scourge, the support of the international community is more needed than ever and must continue. Such support includes certain responsibilities. Under no circumstances can the fight against terrorism be accompanied by human rights violations. The activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force must respect the relevant provisions of international law. We welcome the efforts of the countries of the region to bring former terrorist fighters to trial and to take measures to promote their reintegration. The rule of law is essential for reconciliation and for the demobilization of people who in many cases had joined terrorist groups without any real ideological motivation.

We are aware that the response to the crisis in the Lake Chad Basin region cannot focus only on security. In order to ensure a lasting solution, we must continue our efforts to address the root causes of the crisis through an integrated response. That was the key lesson learned from the Security Council mission to the area a year ago, and it is this integrated approach, which encompasses security, development and human rights, that is enshrined in resolution 2349 (2017), adopted last March, and in the January statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2018/3).

Today the Lake Chad region faces major challenges. The surface of the lake has decreased by half since the 1950s, and its fertile environment attracts neighbouring peoples and subjects the area to strong demographic pressure. The situation is worsening, which is having

lasting impacts on local economic activities such as agriculture and fishing.

Food insecurity, competition for water, and social tensions threaten both host communities and displaced persons and could lead to heightened regional conflicts. As today is World Water Day, I wish to stress the importance of water resources to the security and stability of the Lake Chad region. Water should never be a source of division but, rather, a factor for cooperation between States. This is one of the major challenges facing our generation.

Against that backdrop, France will continue its efforts to strengthen local governance tools, including the Lake Chad Basin Commission, as well as its development assistance projects, through the French Development Agency in particular.

Lastly, I would like to recall that our efforts to stabilize the region must also focus on humanitarian challenges and the protection of civilians.

First, the major humanitarian emergency that the region continues to face must lead us to strengthen our efforts to support the countries on the front line of the fight against terrorism and that are hosting a considerable number of internally displaced persons and refugees. The severity of the humanitarian crisis that the countries of the Lake Chad Basin are experiencing today requires the mobilization of all stakeholders, in particular through support for the humanitarian response plan for the region recently launched by the United Nations. France has taken concrete steps to that end. It provided €14.5 million in humanitarian assistance in 2017 and contributed to the implementation of the Lake Chad Initiative, aimed at empowering displaced persons and refugees, for a total contribution by France of more than €36 million.

Secondly, the fight against terrorism must be accompanied by a continued requirement to protect civilians. We must ensure the ongoing safety of peoples from Boko Haram and support the voluntary and lasting return of displaced persons and refugees where security conditions allow it possible. The issue of refugee and displaced women must also be met with specific and immediate responses, and women should be fully consulted to that end.

I would like to close by recalling the need to break down the barriers between the issues of sustainable development, governance, human rights, and peace and security. Environmental deterioration and in particular the increasingly scant water resources in the Lake Chad region illustrate with particular clarity the imperative need for a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, which lies at the heart of the reform strategy of the Secretary-General and which we fully support. Conflict prevention is one of the major challenges of our time, and its importance will only increase in the years to come.

In this regard, in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017) and the January presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2018/3), we encourage the adoption by Governments and the United Nations system of appropriate risk assessment and management strategies so as to respond to the destabilizing factors linked to environmental deterioration, desertification and climate change.

In the Lake Chad region, we must urgently move from words to action. Commitments must translate into specific actions; rest assured of France's resolute commitment to that end.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to start by thanking the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for having organized this important briefing on the situation in the Lake Chad basin, building on what the Security Council did last year. I wish to express appreciation to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her comprehensive briefing and for her leadership and commitment in addressing the multifaceted challenges facing the Lake Chad basin in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Let me also thank Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan for their remarks.

I wish also to acknowledge the presence here today of the Permanent Representative of Nigeria, our colleague, whose country has been doing so much to fight Boko Haram terrorism.

It has been a year since the Security Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin and the unanimous adoption of resolution 2349 (2017). We want to believe that the issue of peace and security there, as well as the humanitarian and socioeconomic problems facing the region, are now attracting greater international attention. Momentum appears to have been created, as the Deputy Secretary-General said earlier.

We appreciate the progress made in the fight against Boko Haram, which continues to pose a major threat to

peace and security in the region. In this regard, it is important to recognize the efforts of the countries of the region, through their participation in the Multinational Joint Task Force. Unfortunately, the Joint Task Force is not receiving the necessary international support it so richly deserves. The withdrawal of the Chadian troops from the Joint Task Force in the Niger and its impact cannot be taken lightly. We note the decision taken at the latest African Union Summit to request that the African Union Commission work closely with partners to continue mobilizing additional support for the Joint Task Force on the basis of the need expressed by the countries of the region. It is absolutely important that the pledges already made by partners in support of the Joint Force be fulfilled.

The cooperation and coordination of efforts among the United Nations, the African Union and the subregional organizations of the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States is very critical in addressing the challenges of the region. The visit by the African Union Peace and Security Council to the Lake Chad basin in July 2017 and the holding of the first regional stabilization conference for the Lake Chad basin region in November last year are encouraging developments in that regard.

We believe that a security and military response, as well as development interventions aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and tackling poverty by overcoming the unemployment problem, must be strengthened. In that connection, widespread food insecurity, forced displacement, climate change and chronic vulnerability and susceptibility to epidemics that are affecting the people of the region cannot be addressed without enhanced and sustained ergagement and support on the part of the international community. Accordingly, we support the 2018 United Nations humanitarian response plan for north-eas: Nigeria, launched last month, which covers peacebuilding and ensures efforts that contribute to lcnger-term development measures.

The effects of climate change and its mpact on the Lake Chad basin, including the degradation of ecosystems, pose serious challenges to the efforts in addressing the root causes of the conflicts in the basin. The populations in the area highly depend on agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing, which are tied to the life and very existence of the ake. That climate change is wreaking havoc in many areas of the world is increasingly becoming self-evident, but nowhere is that so empirically more demonstrable than in the Lake Chad basin. On top of that, the Boko Haram threat continues unabated. Therefore, the consolidation of peace and the progressive stabilization of the region to allow economic activities in the joint border areas of the countries are essential and need to be supported. The enhanced and sustained support of the United Nations system in a coherent and coordinated manner will continue to be critical in assisting countries of the region to overcome those challenges.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed, Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan for their briefings today. One year after the Security Council's mission to the region and its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017), the presentations are an important reminder that much work remains to be done to address the continuing terrorist threat and the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad basin.

One year later, we can point to some progress in the humanitarian response and efforts to deliver help to those in the greatest need. But the terror of Boko Haram and its offshoot Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS)-West Africa continues to devastate communities, families and lives throughout the region. Their brutality, hatred and inhumanity will spread terror, prolong the humanitarian crisis and displace millions until they are destroyed. We express our deep condolences to the victims of the horrific terrorist attacks in north-east Nigeria and across the Lake Chad region, including the attack and tragic kidnapping of over 100 school girls in Dapchi and the abduction and killing of humanitarian aid workers in Raan.

We are encouraged by the return of a significant number of the girls to Dapchi yesterday, but are horrified to hear of those killed during their captivity. We call for the return of all those abducted across the region and accountability for the perpetrators. As the United States has told the Governments of the Lake Chad region many times, we are their partner in the fight and we will continue to support their efforts to defeat those terrorist groups.

We commend Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, the Niger and Benin for stepping up to counter that threat through the Multinational Joint Task Force. We thank Nigeria for the leadership role it has played in the response and we urge those nations to stay focused on the task,

even while they face other pressing security priorities. Governments must also focus on a smooth transition between military forces and civilian protection forces to ensure that populations are protected even after troops move on. Regional leaders must redouble efforts to secure territory to allow the displaced to return safely to their communities, restart their livelihoods and rebuild their lives.

The latest abductions in Dapchi and Raan show the need for robust protection to end the appeal of abductions and extortion and the cycle of rape, forced marriage, brainwashing and suicide bombings. Nigeria's recently launched demobilization, disassociation, reintegration and reconciliation strategy and the action plan for preventing and countering violent extremism are very positive steps, as are other similar regional efforts. The United States will continue supporting that critical work and we encourage partners to do so as well.

As our briefers and Council colleagues have described here today, success will not depend on military effectiveness on the battlefield alone. It also requires improvements to the economy and governance off the battlefield. The region cannot simply restore north-east Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad basin to what they were before the destruction caused by Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa. They must build a better future there. Governments must work with civic leaders and a wide range of community leaders to create the social, economic and political infrastructure to support lasting peace. That progress must include transparent and credible investigations of human rights violations and abuses, as well as mechanisms to hold those responsible accountable for their actions. Impunity only fuels terrorist recruitment. We therefore reiterate the call in resolution 2349 (2017) for all regional security forces to conduct operations in line with international human rights and humanitarian law and for Governments to take appropriate action to secure justice and accountability. Those efforts deepen people's trust in their Governments and strengthen security efforts.

The staggering size and toll of the region's continuing humanitarian crisis require a dynamic and comprehensive response that helps respond to urgent needs, while looking ahead to the future. The response must lay the groundwork for durable solutions for the more than 10 million people throughout the region needing humanitarian assistance, the 4.5 million facing severe food insecurity and the many still at risk of famine, as well as the 2 million displaced. A successful response depends on access to the communities in need throughout the regions. We reiterate calls on regional Governments to do all they can to help humanitarian partners secure that access. Regional Governments should also do more to bolster grassroots support for the international humanitarian response by reinstituting responsive governance in the region and reassuring the region's people that they have a future in their home communities.

The United States is committed to supporting our Lake Chad partners in their efforts to defeat the terrorists, address the root causes of violent extremism, provide life-saving assistance to those in need, create a secure environment so that the displaced can voluntarily and safely return home and rebuild communities ravaged by conflict. Our bilateral security assistance provides vital support to our Lake Chad basin partners in the fight against Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa, as well as to help those who have been victims of those terrorist groups. The United States is also the single-largest humanitarian donor to the international humanitarian response. On 6 March, the United States announced more than $128 million in additional humanitarian assistance for the Lake Chad region, bringing the total to over $655 million since 2017, and over $1 billion since 2015.

The United States is also helping regional partners rebuild devastated communities. To help establish civilian security, the United States trained civilian law enforcement actors, provides personal protective equipment to police and rebuilds police barracks and stations. Throughout the region, when security conditions allow, we fund education, health and agriculture projects in a holistic effort to kick-start local economies, help establish effective governance and service delivery and foster respect for human rights and accountability for violations and abuses. With our fellow Council members, we stand with the people and the partner Governments of the Lake Chad basin committed to this effort.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire would like to thank Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, for her briefing. Our thanks also go to Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, for their information and suggestions.

In putting the issue of the Lake Chad basin on the agenda for today's meeting, the presidency has encouraged the international community to consider this complex and multidimensional crisis with the aim of investigating its underlying and interdependent causes, for which we thank you, Sir. The fact is that beyond the security crisis in the region, there are several other interrelated factors, such as socioeconomic and environmentally related poverty, affecting the populations living in the Lake Chad basin. In this case, the problem is one of increasingly scarce natural and economic resources, a lack of jobs and sources of income, especially for young people, and issues of governance and administrative decentralization. In considering these factors as the main causes of the crisis, the Security Council addressed the situation comprehensively in resolution 2349 (2017). While welcoming the efforts of the Governments concerned, the Council has also urged them to effectively implement programmes aimed at building and sustaining peace, as well as tackling the root causes of the crisis.

My country believes that the key priorities are ensuring equitable access for the people of the region to resources and services, together with sustainable economic growth. We therefore commend the Security Council's determination to work to restore an atmosphere of peace in the region with a view to enabling those priorities to be implemented. The Secretary-General's report contained in document S/2017/764 has given us some insight into the actions being taken to deal with the threat posed to the region by the terrorist group Boko Haram in particular.

My delegation is pleased with the success of the Multinational Joint Task Force's operations, despite the fact that Boko Haram is still active and dangerous. In that regard, we welcome the recommendations made at the second meeting of the Joint Steering Committee of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the African Union, held from 18 to 20 December of last year, particularly concerning the importance of speeding up the process for making additional support available through the use of funds from international partners in order to meet the urgent Joint Task Force's operational needs. The humanitarian aspect of the crisis in the region also remains worrying and will require the Governments of the region and the international community to synergize their efforts to provide assistance to the populations in distress.

Côte d'Ivoire appreciates the Secretary-General's determination and commitment to support the countries of the region in their efforts to end the ongoing violence and mitigate the people's suffering. We continue to believe that only greater cooperation at the regional and international levels will enable lasting solutions to the crisis to be found while taking into account the specifics of the individual countries concerned. In that regard, my delegation backs the Secretary-General's willingness to commit the United Nations and its partners to advancing the implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel in order to comprehensively address the relevant security and development issues, including in the Lake Chad basin. It is also important to continue and strengthen the coordination of the United Nations and African Union efforts, as well as the cooperation between the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in order to address the challenges in the region of the Lake Chad basin.

One of the biggest challenges in the region continues to be the collective commitment to initiating genuinely dynamic development in the area of the Lake Chad basin. While that certainly means a greater commitment to combating the terrorist groups, it also depends on devising a strategy for finding a solution to the shrinking of Lake Chad, the epicenter of every socioeconomic activity for the peoples of the area. Considering the drastic drop in the lake's depth and area, it will be crucial to speed up the quest for innovative ways to restore it. In that regard, we welcome the conclusions and recommendations of the international conference held in Abuja from 25 to 28 February on the theme of saving Lake Chad to revitalize the basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire would like to affirm its commitment, together with the other members of the Council, to contributing to resolving the current crisis in the Lake Chad basin, once again emphasizing the importance of strengthening the coordination mechanisms for the relevant subregional and regional organizations in order to ensure that their joint actions are effective.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her informative briefing on the situation in the region of the Lake Chad basin. We also listened to the other briefers' reports on the subject with interest.

For our part, we want to emphasize that the topic of today's meeting appears to be "Peace and security in Africa". It would therefore be logical to assume that we in the Security Council, in accordance with our mandate under the Charter of the United Nations and in the context of our consideration of the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region, will focus directly on the deplorable security situation.

We are not arguing with the fact that there is a whole range of diverse problems that are undoubtedly exacerbating the overall situation in the region. The climate and habitat naturally have a serious impact on people's lives. However, there are other, more suitable, forums for discussing these issues — the Second Committee of the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council. There is no need to disrupt the existing division of responsibilities and overload the Security Council's agenda. Any erosion of its mandate, and the consequent diminution of its effectiveness, must be guarded against.

By the way, we warned that this was potentially an issue when we voted on resolution 2349 (2017) last year, and we were not the only ones. We were not listened to at the time and, unfortunately, the resolution did not include the elements that would have helped to make it an effective tool for international efforts to assist the countries of the Lake Chad basin, particularly in the area of counter-terrorism. I would like to stress that what we are talking about is fighting terrorism, not some conflict or other. In the relevant Security Council resolution, Boko Haram is classified as a terrorist organization.

So where are we today, a year after the adoption of resolution 2349 (2017)? So far, Boko Haram still seems to feel entirely untrammelled. It has continued to commit terrorist acts and kidnap schoolgirls in the region, with regard to which the Council very recently issued another presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3). Thank heaven that today we were informed that a large number of them have been released. Yet we were also shocked by the news of the possible tragic fate of the rest. We are grateful to the Nigerian authorities for their counter-terrorism efforts in this regard.

Boko Haram's terrorist activity is a real threat to the States of the region. It undermines people's settled lives, forces them to move to less dangerous areas and interferes with normal commercial and economic activity. Only when this challenge to an entire region is eliminated will it be possible to make significant progress in resolving other pressing problems and to undertake thorough efforts to prevent natural disasters and do away with their consequences.

In this regard, I cannot help recalling the disastrous extent of the destabilization in the region after the collapse of the Libyan State. Far from normalizing things in Libya, which we were discussing only yesterday (see S/PV.8211), it has continued to have a negative impact on the regional situation. I am not saying that in order to irritate anyone on the Council. It is a warning against undertaking such destructive regional ventures in future. After 2011, terrorism spread across the Sahel-Sahara region and West and Central Africa like a cancer and, despite every effort, it has continued to threaten the stability of countries in that part of Africa and even beyond its borders. Unfortunately, we will be forced to wrestle with the consequences of the externally inflicted crisis in Libya, which include uncontrolled and illegal flows of arms and migrants and the spread of radical ideologies, for a long time to come.

In that regard, we consider it important to continue to provide all possible assistance to countries that are fighting terrorists in strengthening their own national potential and encouraging the development of solid regional cooperation. In this area, what is needed is cohesion, not competition, and a good example of that is the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force of the States of the Lake Chad basin, which are doing a great deal to curtail Boko Haram's activities. We understand that security efforts should go hand in hand with advancing policies aimed at strengthening the institutions of State power and socioeconomic development. We note the efforts in that regard of the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the holding of a first conference on stabilizing the situation in the countries of the region. Efforts to find answers to the current problems based on the notion of African solutions to African problems can only be welcomed.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Russia, as before, will continue to provide assistance to the States of the region both through international institutions and bilateral channels, without making our help conditional on any politically loaded demands.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for the

information that she has provided us with today. We also express our gratitude for the briefings by Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser of Adelphi, and by Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. We would like to highlight the Commission's work in developing mechanisms to address the crisis in the region, including its root causes.

Bolivia is concerned about the continuing threat posed by Boko Haram to security in the Lake Chad basin, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the region. This terrorist group's terrible attacks on civilians, including assassinations, kidnappings, the use of children as suicide bombers, sexual violence against women and the recruitment of children, underscore the continuing importance of coordinating efforts to deal with its extreme violence. We recognize that the tireless efforts of Nigeria, the Niger, Chad and Cameroon have enabled us to make encouraging progress in reducing the terrorist group's fighting capacity, but we must continue to counter the terrorist acts that threaten peace and security in the region. We therefore consider that the international community's support is crucially important to the Multinational Joint Task Force and the countries of the region that are combating terrorism on behalf of us all.

The region is currently facing a grave humanitarian crisis, with more than 10 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. That reality must make us focus our attention and commitment on uniting the efforts of the States of the Lake Chad basin and regional and subregional organizations, with a short-term focus on combating food insecurity, addressing the basic needs of internally displaced persons, refugees and those most vulnerable, such as children and women, and improving the general population's quality of life by providing access to basic services. We therefore encourage donor countries to honour their pledges made at the 2017 Oslo Humanitarian Conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region and make it possible for those needs to be met.

The Plurinational State of Bolivia recognizes the importance of developing a joint regional strategy that takes into account the underlying causes of the crisis in the region as well as initiatives to combat the threat posed by Boko Haram. We note that the Governments of the countries concerned are facing complex challenges in implementing programmes addressing the root causes of the crisis, primarily because a large part of their resources are earmarked for the security sector. It will be crucial to work to reduce poverty and social, political, economic and gender-based inequalities, and to increase countries' ability to provide basic services, education and infrastructure. We must also consider the adverse consequences of climate change and ecological changes. In that context, water shortages, desertification and drought are increasing instability in the region.

As we said in last year's meeting on preventive diplomacy and transboundary waters (see S/PV.7959), during Bolivia's June presidency of the Security Council, a high percentage of the world's freshwater sources are shared by two or more States. Water quality, use and scarcity can often generate conflicts or the conditions for potential conflicts. But States that share this life-sustaining resource must translate those ties into opportunities to cooperate effectively so that they can work inclusively to share their knowledge in order to foster consensus and identify more efficient and cooperative water-management policies. In that regard, it is essential that the various bodies of the United Nations, based on their respective mandates, redouble their efforts to jointly address that issue together with the parties concerned.

In conclusion, we believe that it will be crucial to provide continued coordination and support to the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States in encouraging them to redouble their efforts and in working together with them.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank today's briefers, Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, for their very comprehensive statements. I also thank the President for convening today's meeting to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin region.

Poland has been closely following the political and security situation in this region, which is facing a dreadful humanitarian crisis, with about 11 million people in need of immediate assistance and more than 2 million dealing with internal displacement, particularly women and children. We believe that the Security Council should remain thoroughly engaged and monitor the situation carefully.

We support the full implementation of resolution 2349 (2017). We firmly condemn all terrorist attacks, violations of international humanitarian law and human

rights abuses by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in the region, including those involving killings and other violence against civilians, especially women and children. In that regard, we appreciate the Multinational Joint Task Force counter-terrorism operations aimed at ending the Boko Haram insurgency. However, there remains much to be done in that regard, since a number of terrorist attacks have shown that the group remains a significant threat, especially in north-eastern Nigeria.

In order to end the terrorist threat in the Lake Chad basin region, the United Nations, together with the countries concerned, must address the root causes of the violence and instability there, which originate in the social and economic hardships endured by marginalized communities. If we do not tackle these issues, we will not be able to strengthen prevention and ensure that the conflicts can be sustainably resolved. Only by empowering the region's marginalized populations, including women, children and other communities that suffer from discrimination, can we effectively counter the spread of violent extremism. At this stage, humanitarian assistance alone is not enough to ensure stable and sustainable livelihoods for the people affected. Long-term development assistance must address the vulnerabilities of the region, including food insecurity and climate change.

Climate change is a global threat facing all of us today. It hinders access to resources and causes extreme weather events, disasters, food insecurity and water shortages. All of those factors can lead to the escalation of local and regional conflicts and increases in migration. Poland recognizes the devastating consequences that climate change and ecological degradation, among other factors, are having on the stability of the region, and we are aware of the importance of increased international engagement in addressing these problems.

As we celebrate World Water Day and the launch of the International Decade for Action: Water for sustainable development (2018-2028), we would like to stress the important role of water in the peace and security agenda. We must address the adverse effects that water, or the lack of it, can produce and the challenges it can pose, and pay more attention to the importance of adequate risk assessment and management. While concentrating on conflict prevention and sustaining peace, we should not forget Sustainable Development Goal 6, as we have already seen several water-related crises. We therefore welcome regional initiatives aimed at improving the situation in the Lake Chad basin, revitalizing local ecosystems and supporting sustainable livelihoods.

As President of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Poland will continue to lead climate negotiations in the spirit of the Paris Climate Change Agreement, ensuring the equal participation of all countries and inclusive and transparent negotiations, while bearing in mind that resolving climate-security issues is in the interest of countries vulnerable to climate change. Effective adaptation to and mitigation of climate change can also be perceived as conflict-prevention tools that can make a significant contribution to building resilience among the countries affected.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I sincerely thank you, Sir, for including today's very important issue in your programme of work, enabling us to discuss the situation in the Lake Chad basin region for the first time this year and give greater visibility to a serious crisis that has received very little media attention.

We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, Mr. Mohammed Bila, representative of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and Ms. Chitra Nagarajan, Senior Conflict Adviser at Adelphi, for their briefings, which underscored the severity of the situation in the Lake Chad basin region and its relationship to peace and security in Africa, in particular in Central and West Africa. The violent activities of the armed terrorist group Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria affect Nigeria's neighbours in the Lake Chad basin — Cameroon, Chad and the Niger — with devastating implications for food security and livelihoods. Boko Haram's acts of terrorism have killed more than 15,000 people in the region, led to the displacement of another 2.5 million in those four countries and hindered access to land and farming activities, which in turn has resulted in enormous humanitarian deprivation in a region already plagued by food insecurity, poverty and environmental degradation.

The emergence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and other non-State actors that operate outside the law, undermining States' sovereignty and exploiting their vulnerabilities, is both a cause and effect of the

factors I just mentioned. This situation is particularly apparent on our continent and we commend the Council for the initiatives it has already undertaken to address it. However, we must remain vigilant and take preventive and proactive measures to explore all of the variables that play a role in the peace and security equation in the region.

The Lake Chad basin is facing a complex humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria, the far northern region of Cameroon, western Chad and south-eastern Niger. In the areas of those countries that are worst affected, conflict and displacement are compounding the other structural factors that undermine people's livelihoods, exacerbate food insecurity and poverty and reduce access to basic social services such as water, sanitation, health and education. There is no need to cite all the statistics, but according to several reports, about 11 million people are extremely vulnerable and in need of humanitarian assistance.

As many representatives underscored at the international conference on saving Lake Chad to revitalize the basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development — held from 26 to 28 February in Abuja — Lake Chad, part of the common heritage of humankind, is testament to the fact that global warming is closely linked to food insecurity and instability. Climate change, exacerbated by inefficient management of water resources over the years, has shrunk the surface of Lake Chad by 90 per cent in the past 40 years. The fact that the lake has dried up and now contains only 10 per cent of its previously normal volume of water, added to the resulting acute food shortage, has created many security and peace crises in the region.

The Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) in March of last year testified to its resolute and firm decision to support regional efforts to combat the Boko Haram terrorist movement, resolve the humanitarian crisis and eliminate the root causes of the particularly difficult situation in which the Lake Chad basin finds itself. The dual security and humanitarian crisis there is putting us to the test in adopting a truly integrated and comprehensive approach to the region's multidimensional challenges. The problems facing the region, which range from terrorism, the illegal trade in arms and the trafficking and abduction of people to food insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation, cannot be solved in isolation from one another.

Equatorial Guinea would like to commend the praiseworthy efforts of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the African Union and, in particular, the Multinational Joint Task Force, which have made significant progress in their struggle to recover territory captured by Boko Haram, and which have thereby shown that African regional and subregional organizations can play a very active role in such contexts. The supranational structures of the Joint Task Force's configuration and the Group of Five for the Sahel have also been instrumental in regional efforts to eradicate violence in the area. A coordinated regional approach to the crisis is fundamental to achieving the results we want.

However, the security gains must be accompanied by support for development, with a focus on emergency assistance with food production — in agriculture, livestock and fisheries — while addressing the factors creating instability in the region. Meeting immediate needs will pave the way for the medium- and long-term activities that can help to improve the resilience of the population.

I would like to conclude by underscoring and expressing our appreciation for the great determination of the Governments of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and the Niger to combat Boko Haram.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Netherlands.

With its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) on the Lake Chad basin a year ago, the Council recognized that security, development and human rights are interlinked. It also recognized that such links are vital to achieving an effective and comprehensive approach to stabilization, reconciliation and counter-terrorism. However, we must also strengthen preventive action.

The current crisis in the Lake Chad basin is the result of our collective inaction in addressing the root causes of the problem 15 years ago. Let me highlight that fact by focusing on three root causes about which we are particularly concerned in this context. The first is water and climate change; the second, socioeconomic challenges; and the third is a lack of inclusion and empowerment of women.

With regard to the first of these, water and climate, Secretary-General Guterres has said that water, peace and security are inextricably linked. He is absolutely right. As others have said, today is World Water Day.

That is another reason that I want to highlight the example of the availability of water and the challenges posed by the increased variability of the climate around Lake Chad. Those two factors have real effects on livelihoods, farming, fishing and food security, as Mr. Bila so eloquently said earlier today. Building resilience, with a view to preventing further tensions, requires investment in sustainable, integrated water management, all while taking into account the effects of climate change.

This month, the High-level Panel on Water, of which the Prime Minister of the Netherlands is an active member, presented its report, *Making Every Drop Count*. I would like to highlight some of its recommendations. We should address, first, the adverse impacts and challenges that water can cause; secondly, the need for adequate risk assessment and management solutions; thirdly, water-related root causes; and fourthly, we should take pre-emptive action. Those recommendations are crucial to both water scarcity and climate change.

The second root cause that we want to highlight is the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, which makes the population vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists, as Ms. Nagarajan made clear earlier. The region itself has risen to address that challenge, and we commend it for that. The Multinational Joint Task Force, which brings together Benin, Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, has pushed back Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. I pay tribute to their efforts, and I welcome the presence of our colleagues from those countries with us today. However, more must be done to address the underlying factors that drive people towards violent extremism. The recent joint United Nations mission is a good first step in developing conflict-sensitive programming across the United Nations system to improve socioeconomic opportunities. We call on the United Nations to strengthen that approach and to improve reporting on such efforts to the Security Council.

That brings me to the third root cause that I would like to address, the lack of inclusion and empowerment of women. Women and girls in the Lake Chad region are disproportionately affected as targets of terrorism and by lost livelihoods. As Ms. Nagarajan made clear, in such challenging situations, the most vulnerable become even more vulnerable. But women are also strong actors in building resilience and in advancing sustainable development in the region. We need an integrated response that ensures the full inclusion and participation of women and girls as stewards of their own futures.

Let me continue with the following call to action. To ensure a more integrated long-term approach to sustaining peace in the Lake Chad region, we are asking the United Nations for the following efforts. First, we need integrated risk assessment, conflict analysis and early warning. Secondly, we need more capacity for joint risk assessments and management by all United Nations organizations. Thirdly, we need to take climate change into account. Fourthly, we need to ensure conflict-, gender- and climate-sensitive planning and programming, such as stabilization plans that take into account the availability of resources around Lake Chad. Fifthly, we need comprehensive evaluations and reports in order to thoroughly analyse the many risks to peace and security and their effects on other programmes in the region. The upcoming report of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel will provide a good opportunity for putting that into practice. Lastly, we need to apply the lessons of the Lake Chad basin and the need for preventive action to other regions.

In conclusion, with its adoption of resolution 2349 (2017) the Security Council showed its ability to call for early action in the Lake Chad region. However, the Lake Chad basin is not unique. The root causes of conflict are visible in many places in the world. We want resolution 2349 (2017) to be the rule, not an exception, so that the Council can take preventive action for future generations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to once again encourage all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Muhammad Bande (Nigeria): Allow me at the outset, on behalf of the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria, to thank the presidency of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for organizing this important briefing. It is illustrative of the positive disposition of the Netherlands, and indeed that of the Security Council, towards resolving the myriad of challenges confronting the Lake Chad region.

Our special appreciation goes to Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed for her remarks. We thank Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan for their briefings. We also thank all the memebrs of the Council for their statements.

The Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted virtually every facet of human endeavour, including the economy, the polity and the lives and livelihoods of people across the Lake Chad region. The insurgency has been met with resolve and resilience by the Multinational Joint Task Force, among others, and as a result we have continued to witness the emergence of rescued survivors and victims who were hitherto under the brutal oppression of Boko Haram. Indeed, three days ago we celebrated the release of 105 out of 110 abducted Dapchi schoolgirls. Nigeria is committed to rescuing the remaining victims, as well as those who were abducted earlier.

May I seize this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of our Governments to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect civilians within their national jurisdiction. This conviction underlies our Governments' resolve to take all measures necessary to protect civilians in the battle against the terrorist group Boko Haram and its ilk.

That progress notwithstanding, we are aware of other challenges in the region, including climate, ecological and environmental changes, particularly the shrinking of Lake Chad. Averting the latter will require dedicated international intervention to recharge the lake. The lake is very dear to our hearts, as it is a source of livelihood to over 45 million people living in the region. It is one of the oldest lakes in Africa and is shared by Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Niger and Nigeria.

The people living in the region depend on Lake Chad for agriculture, fisheries, livestock production and, indeed, their economic well-being. Unfortunately, today all that is history due to the drying up of the lake. This has resulted in dire consequences for our peoples. Fish varieties are long gone, leaving the fishermen jobless; farmers and herdsmen struggle over the little water that is left; herdsmen traverse long distances in search of greener pastures, resulting in conflicts; and our young people are joining terrorist groups because of difficult economic conditions. The net effect of all these has been instability in the subregion. We therefore reiterate our call for rededicated international action, increased global attention and active engagement with the countries of the Lake Chad region to accelerate recovery efforts and to address the root causes of terrorism , in accordance with resolution 2349 (2017) and the recent presidential statement S/PRST/2018/3 on the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, adopted by the Security Council on 30 January.

This will require strong United Nations cooperation with regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission, in conflict prevention and management. The United Nations should continue to take primary leadership in the maintenance of international peace and security by providing, in a predictable and sustainable manner, adequate funding and other enablers to regional initiatives and peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council. In this regard, we call for the expeditious disbursement of the $458 million for humanitarian purposes, announced at the 2017 Oslo conference.

On our part, the Governments of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, with the support of UNESCO, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank and the Governments of Germany, China, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Hungary, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America organized the International Conference on Saving the Lake Chad in Abuja, from 26 to 28 February.

The Conference, held under the theme "Saving the Lake Chad to revitalize the Basin's ecosystem for sustainable livelihood, security and development", sought, among other things, to create global awareness on the socioeconomic and environmental challenges arising from the shrinkage of the Lake Chad, threats to livelihoods, including insecurity, and others. It also discussed and developed consensus on the different options for restoring the lake, including the interbasin water transfer project from the Ubangi River in Central Africa to Lake Chad.

We are pleased to inform the Council that the Conference adopted a road map for the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference that should lead to the restoration of the lake, fishing and irrigated farming as a way of alleviating poverty, strengthening climate resilience in the basin, creating employment, leading to reduction of terrorist activities and increasing the revenue of the population and that

of the Lake Chad basin countries. We look forward to enjoying the support of the international community in implementing this well thought-out road map.

We wish to also affirm our commitment to addressing the complex and multifaceted challenges facing the region by tackling the root causes of the crises in a holistic manner. In that context, our respective Governments have developed programmes, such as the Buhari Plan of Nigeria; the Renaissance Programme of the Niger; the Recovery Road Map and the Special Youth Triennial Programme of Cameroon; Vision 2030: the Chad We Want of Chad; and the Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan of the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

As has been stated by many others, the special attention and support of the international community are also required to alleviate the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, particularly women and children.

As we continue on this journey towards our goal, we wish to use this medium to solicit the Council's continued collaboration and support. We must treat the issues of Lake Chad with the urgency they deserve and show the needed political commitment to reviving the Lake. Together, let us share the mission of rescuing Lake Chad with renewed vigour, determination and international collaboration, as our inaction or delay will continue to accelerate the deteriorating standard of living of millions of our people, with dire consequences for our continent.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our pledge to restore Lake Chad to its former glory. Recognizing that our efforts will be more productive with international support, we call for the full implementation of the provisions of resolution 2349 (2017), and for our international partners — technical and financial — to remain unwavering in their support.

The President: Let me once again express our appreciation to our briefers, Mr. Bila and Ms. Nagarajan.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8213

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8213th meeting
Friday, 23 March 2018, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Kaag	(Netherlands)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Kononuchenko
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Eckels-Currie

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme.

Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley are joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Dublin and Biel, Switzerland, respectively.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Recalling the Security Council's latest note 507 on its working methods (S/2017/507), I wish to encourage all participants, both members and non-members of the Council, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Note 507 also encourages briefers to be succinct and to focus on key issues. Briefers are further encouraged to limit initial remarks to 15 minutes or less.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: Famines and extreme hunger have been a part of the human experience since the first person walked the Earth. Yet it is possible to eradicate famine from the human experience within our lifetime. I would like to take a few moments to explain to the Security Council why I think that is the case and how it can help achieve that goal.

Despite the wildest predictions, famines have become less frequent and less lethal over the past few decades. That is an big achievement. What happened?

First, we have seen a dramatic expansion in agricultural output and productivity, making more food available and making it cheaper. In the past 50 years, dramatic improvements in agriculture, from plant breeding to pest prevention to storage to irrigation to transportation, produced a fourfold increase in food grain production using only 12 per cent more agricultural land. Transportation networks, improvements in cold-chain technology, science and trade allow food to be available more consistently and more predictably. That trend is likely to continue. Science and human ingenuity are likely to continue to increase productivity, and we will seize the enormous potential to develop agricultural land in less productive areas of the world with today's technology and rising demand.

Secondly, we have witnessed a global reduction in poverty. Large numbers of previously poor people have gained purchasing power over larger volumes of food now being produced. That would not have happened without international action and support, including help with safety net schemes in some of the poorest countries over the past 20 years, which have been able to scale up and down as harvests fail or succeed and which have been adopted into national policy frameworks. That means that we do not have to face situations in which drought automatically turns into famine.

While most of the world is better off and faces fewer risks of famine and hunger, some people still experience the opposite. The remaining risk of famine and hunger is now concentrated in a relatively small number of countries affected by large-scale, severe and protracted conflict. Nearly two thirds of the world's hungry live in countries in conflict. Nearly 500 million undernourished people — and almost 80 per cent of the world's 155 million stunted children — live in countries affected by conflict.

My colleagues at the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, together with the European Union, released a new study yesterday confirming that conflict — often conflated with extreme climatic shock and high prices of staple foods — is now the main driver of global food insecurity. That includes the four countries where there was a famine risk last year. Famine was prevented in those countries only through concerted international efforts.

We therefore have to build on the experience of last year and sustain and expand our efforts in those countries, with more funding and better access, while we continue to join up humanitarian life-saving with longer-term development efforts. We also need to build upon the vast experience in the humanitarian system, which, over the past decades, has become more effective, efficient and better funded. We have learned a difficult lesson: between hunger and death there lies disease. Our response has become more professional and more integrated. We cover health, nutrition and

education, in addition to food, water and shelter, which used to be our focus.

Most people affected by conflict live in rural areas, but South Sudan's former breadbasket, the Equatorias, has nearly emptied as farmers have fled to Uganda. In cities, fighting hinders other food production, transportation and distribution to larger parts of the population, reducing access to food and causing prices to increase. When civilians exhaust their resilience, they are often forced to flee. Once people are displaced, food insecurity increases for both displaced people and their hosts — communities of people who themselves are often living on the cusp of survival. Hunger is the clear corollary of the vicious cycle of displacement and conflict.

The behaviour of combatants in these contexts is often atrocious. Humanitarian access — both by agencies to reach people and for people to reach aid — is too often difficult or denied. In some cases, starvation is being used as a method of warfare. Warring parties damage or destroy water systems, farms, livestock and markets. Food-sellers and traders face looting and exorbitant costs to get food to their clients.

International humanitarian law is designed to protect against hunger in armed conflict. The fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution serve to safeguard civilian objects necessary for food production and distribution. International humanitarian law is very clear: it prohibits starvation of the civilian population as a method of warfare; it prohibits attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects that are indispensable to the survival of the civilian population; it requires that humanitarian personnel and assets be respected and protected; and it requires that all parties to conflict allow and facilitate impartial humanitarian relief for civilians in need and that they ensure that humanitarian personnel have the freedom of movement to carry out life-saving work.

While parties to conflict bear the primary responsibility for respecting international humanitarian law, all States carry the duty to ensure that that law is respected. Members of the Security Council have influence over parties to conflicts. The Council has the means to investigate violations of the law. The Council also has the means to enhance accountability when that law is violated.

There are no humanitarian solutions to conflict. We all know that peace and political solutions are what will disrupt the vicious cycle of conflict and hunger. The Security Council's main responsibility is peace and international security. In other words, the Council can help prevent famine from ever occurring again.

The President: I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beasley.

Mr. Beasley: It is great, Madam President, to be with you in the digital world. It is always good to see you, Madam, and it is great to be speaking before the Security Council. It is good to hear from my friend Mark Lowcock, who is doing a great job. I have really come to respect him and the spirit he has in building the teams and coalitions that are necessary to confront the conflicts, the wars, the hunger and the other problems that we are facing on a day-to-day basis.

When I took this role about a year ago, I visited over 36 countries, some of them multiple times, and what I have seen is good news and bad news. What we are reporting as of yesterday is extremely bad news, and as Mark was saying, there is no reason that there should ever be famine in the world today. There is actually no reason there should be hunger in the world today, when we have $300 trillion of available wealth. But wars and conflicts are driving hunger in a way we have never seen before. In fact, the hunger rate went up from 777 million people to 815 million people, as Council members are well aware. But what is very disturbing is that, even though we have been able to avert famine in countries like South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria, particularly its north-east, we now have three countries that are again on the brink of famine, and it is absolutely horrific that we were in this place.

But what we have seen for the past three years is that the number of those who are severely hungry — those who are literally marching to the brink of starvation — has gone from 80 million people to 108 million people, 108 million people to 124 million people. We do not have enough money to feed full rations to 80 million people. The moneys of the World Food Programme are about $6 billion; we need $9 to $10 billion just to reach the 108 million people, much less the 124 million people. The question we have to ask ourselves today is, what is driving this extreme hunger rate? The answer is, as Mark clearly stipulated, human-made conflict. I speak here on behalf of the Rome-based agencies, understanding that we can in fact end world hunger by 2030, but we cannot do it as long as there is conflict.

Let me paint a couple pictures of what I see as a worst-case scenario if we do not get ahead of the curve. This is what I said to the security conference in Munich just a few weeks ago, where I saw many members of the Council in the Chamber today. When we take a country the size of Syria, for example, with approximately 20 million people, with destabilization and conflict, we know from our studies and surveys that for every 1 per cent increase in hunger there is a 2 per cent increase in migration. What is also very clear is that a Syrian, like any other internally displaced person, will move two, three or four times inside his or her country before he or she will leave the country. The cost of feeding a Syrian inside Syria, for example, is about 50 cents per day, which is almost double the normal cost, because the cost of war creates additional transportation and logistics costs. By the way, because of conflict, we incur an additional $1 billion in extra costs in terms of just delivering food. But back to the point: 50 cents per day for feeding a Syrian in Syria, €50 per day for the total humanitarian support and costs, whether it is in Switzerland or Germany or anywhere else in Europe.

As I tell my friends, if leaders today — wherever it is in the world, but particularly in Europe — think they had a problem with the migration issue, having been infiltrated by a few elements from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), from a nation of 20 million people, with ISIS moving down into the greater Sahel region — an area of 500 million people — and partnering with Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaida, then they should consider that we cannot stand and continue to take the old approach to address the issues in this arena. We have got to rethink how to use humanitarian dollars more effectively, how to use development dollars more effectively to address hunger in conflict, because humanitarian aid and development are clearly related to one another. What we are seeing, therefore, is that we have to get ahead of the curve and work together as a team with better collaboration and coordination.

For example, we feed almost 80 million people on any given day, and we are feeding millions of people on any given day in the greater Sahel region. We know that last year alone, out of our 80 some odd million, more than 10 million were involved with the food-for-asset programme. What does that mean? When you feed 80-something million people a day, as Mark can tell you, you learn a lot. You listen to people; they hear things, they tell you things. They know what is going on.

ISIS and terrorist groups want to use food as a weapon of recruitment, a weapon of war — as Mark was saying, a weapon of destruction. We think that the Security Council, the United Nations in general and our donors around the world, our Member States, should use food as a weapon of reconstruction, a weapon of peace, a weapon for bringing people together.

Let me just give some results in connection with the 10 million people that we had engaged in a food-for-asset programme. This shows what happens when sustainability and resilience are created in areas that are dramatically impacted for a variety of reasons — yes, terrorism, but also climate impact. We see drought-stricken areas in the greater Sahel region and what happens there; not just in the greater Sahel, but in Ethiopia, in Kenya, in Somalia and other places.

I have yet to meet a single beneficiary who did not want to improve his or her community and life position. They do not want support only in terms of saving lives but also in terms of changing lives. We reforested more than 8,000 hectares of land just last year. More than 137,000 hectares of land were rehabilitated, as well as more than 5,000 water ponds and shallow wells. More than 11,000 kilometres of roads were rebuilt and repaired, as well as feeder roads for markets and access.

The point is, it is not just about feeding people, it is giving them resilience. The mothers will explain that they did not want to see their husbands join ISIS, Al-Qaida, Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab. But they will tell you also that after their little girl or their little boy had not eaten in two weeks, the husband had no choice but to join. So they yield because of conditions of vulnerability, where they do not have resilience or sustainable development. But when we carry out the programmes effectively, sustainable development and resilience are created, giving families opportunities — not just saving lives but changing livelihoods and giving opportunities. Great things happen, and this minimizes the impact of extremist groups in these very fragile areas.

Let me just give an example. When I was speaking just two weeks with the Minister of Agriculture — we all understand that there is a climate impact with regard to the greater Sahel region — I was told that the Sahara is moving down at the rate of 1.5 kilometres per year into the pasturelands, the greenlands, the croplands. What does that mean? On the surface, it may not seem

that big of a deal. But the herders and the pastoralists are having to move down 1.5 kilometres with it to have vegetation for their cattle, their goats, their sheep, and that means more conflict with farmers. We are seeing that conflict continuing to destabilize the situation, and the extremist groups are trying to take advantage of it.

I therefore plead with the Security Council to help us first and foremost in the wars. The Council, I believe, has a chance to do more to impact the world than in any time period in our history, because we are facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the history of the United Nations. I believe that the men and women in this Chamber, who are from various nations, may have differences on some issues, but should not have difference on all issues. Let us work together to end conflict. Let us work together to make certain that we have the access we need to provide humanitarian and development support. Until we do so, we will never solve world hunger, because hunger is directly related to conflict, and conflict is directly related to hunger.

I think that Mark and I could probably answer questions for hours upon hours and speak to this issue from the heart all day long, but I wish to thank you, Madam President, for allowing us this opportunity to speak briefly and let the Council know what we are seeing out there on any given day. The Council's support is vital and critical to our continued success.

The President: I thank Mr. Beasley for his briefing, and, in my national capacity, both briefers for their very compelling story, narrative and clear call to action.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

I should like once again to reiterate our thanks to Mark Lowcock and David Beasley for their comprehensive and informative briefings.

It is very clear that one of the main causes of hunger is conflict: man-made conflict. After decades of a steady decline in the number of people suffering from malnutrition and famine, today we are faced with a dangerous setback, one that endangers Sustainable Development Goal 2, a world of zero hunger. The unthinkable is happening: hunger is again on the rise.

Last year, the Secretary-General called on the Council to take action in response to no fewer than four major new famines: in Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Nigeria. These famines were directly threatening 20 million people: men, women and children. These and other examples of food insecurity have one important factor in common, and one alone: conflict.

In our world of abundance, technology and big data, famine is completely avoidable. Where it happens, it is man-made. It occurs where people harm other people. Regrettably, so-called man-made famine is almost becoming a tautology.

While all-out famine has been barely averted in the four countries I just mentioned, many people remain extremely food-insecure. This entails grave risks for regional stability, as conflict and hunger do not respect national borders or boundaries. Rising levels of hunger and conflict will lead to greater migration, force displacement and put severe pressure on host countries in the region and beyond. The fact that this is happening in the twenty-first century, in an age of unparalleled progress, technological possibilities and wealth, is shameful.

If people are the main cause of famine and food insecurity in conflict situations, then surely people are able to resolve this issue. This means that the end of famine depends on political will.

Armed conflict affects food security in many ways. In modern warfare we see fields of crops being destroyed, bakeries burned and markets hit. We see parties to a conflict deliberately denying access to food aid for civilians in need. We see indiscriminate bombing that damages food sources and prevents civilians from reaching them safely. We see this all too often, in too many places.

I recently visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the camp of Katanika, an older lady told me that all her family members had had to flee their villages, leaving everything behind. They do not have enough to eat and no longer have a way of producing their own food. Going back to their villages of origin is impossible: everything has been destroyed.

In South Sudan, army checkpoints prevent aid convoys from reaching their destination. The recent report by the Panel of Experts stated in no uncertain terms that starvation was being used there as a weapon of war.

Elsewhere, as in Syria, we witness situations that we would not have imagined possible in our era. Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock said in a briefing

to the Council on 28 February, so very recently, that without humanitarian access,

> "we will soon see even more people dying from starvation and disease than from the bombing and shelling". (*see S/PV.8195, p. 3*)

In Yemen as well, we see the denial of access having grave consequences for the number of people suffering from food insecurity.

Clearly, the problem is not a lack of rules. Rather, it is the persistent failure of warring parties to comply with those rules. That is what causes civilians in conflict to suffer even more.

Together, we, the international community, have agreed to regulate the conduct of warfare: to spare civilians in conflict to the greatest extent possible and to respect, above all, their human dignity. Flouting the law of war not only turns these norms into hollow phrases; it erodes the rules-based international order itself. We cannot allow that to happen.

Hunger caused by conflict as well as starvation reflect our collective failure, and the Council has a collective responsibility to address it and to prevent it from happening in future. For this we need a detailed framework for action.

First, we should reaffirm the norms established over the past 70 years: the prohibition of starvation as a method of warfare, the protection of civilian objects necessary for food production, and, above all, guarantees for humanitarian access. International humanitarian law, which all warring parties are obliged to respect and comply with, defines our humanity. We must not allow those rules to unravel.

Secondly, we should take a firm stance against violations of international law by holding to account those responsible for such violations. That can be done within national jurisdictions; but where those jurisdictions fail, international mechanisms come into play. In such situations, the most serious cases should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Thirdly, we should step up our efforts to prevent food insecurity in conflict. The Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme and their partners have the means and technology to issue early warnings, which they regularly report on. In conflict situations, it is up to the Council to follow up with early action, not only to prevent conflicts from exacerbating food insecurity in the short-term by ensuring humanitarian access, but also to save societies from the perils of a generation raised in hunger. We therefore need continuous engagement by the Council.

Finally, humanitarian aid in itself is not a sustainable answer. It never has been. Only political solutions can truly end suffering. Therein lies the most important task for the Council.

Hunger is the most avoidable of disasters. Starvation is the most heinous method of warfare. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that the starvation of civilians becomes a crime of the past — a practice both forbidden and punishable. I am counting on the support of those present and look forward to working together to achieve that important goal.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte d'Ivoire thanks your country, Madam President, for organizing this important discussion on the topic of conflict and hunger. This highly relevant theme is of great concern to the Security Council in the light of the numerous conflicts taking place in the world and the serious humanitarian crises they engender. Côte d'Ivoire also extends its gratitude to Mr. Lowcock and Mr. Beasley for their briefings on the matter at hand.

Not a day goes by without United Nations humanitarian agencies, non-United Nations humanitarian organizations, the international media and human rights organizations issuing urgent appeals to the international community, particularly to the Organization and the Security Council, on conflict-related hunger and food insecurity. The latest report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, published in 2017, which unfortunately portrays a particularly alarming situation, clearly highlights with evidence the strong correlation between armed conflict, hunger and food insecurity, and appeals to our conscience for us to commit to collective action towards lasting conflict resolution. According to the report, 489 million of the 815 million food insecure and chronically undernourished people in the world live in conflict-affected countries, including in Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

While recognizing that armed conflict and hunger are intertwined, my delegation believes that identifying root causes and the nature of conflicts could provide

a lasting solution to the problem. Certainly, finding solutions to the underlying and various causes of conflict is the best way to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and reduce the risk of food insecurity. In that context, Member States must continue their efforts to promote democracy, the rule of law and inclusive development and fight against corruption, the dividends of which will benefit the entire population.

As for the United Nations, it must continue relentlessly in the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals by encouraging Member States to prioritize food security in their policy-making by developing an agricultural policy that requires targeted investments as a matter of priority with a view to satisfying the basic needs of the populations. Such agricultural policies must also take into account the empowerment of women, who can play a leading role in strengthening food security and combating climate change. Eliminating hunger is therefore a collective responsibility that requires us, in our opinion, to fight upstream against all the factors that can lead to poverty and food crises, which constitute real threats to international peace and security.

It is regrettable to note that countries in conflict or weakened by the persistence of political crises devote a significant portion of their financial resources to military spending, to the detriment of the agricultural sector, while better targeted investments could contribute to boosting resilience to food insecurity and hunger. Furthermore, due to massive population displacements and the resulting densely populated concentrations, armed conflicts and violence lead to the overexploitation and depletion of water resources and arable lands, as well as increased strain on the environment.

As evidence of that, the region of the Lake Chad basin, which has experienced an alarming 90 per cent drop in water volume over the past 40 years, has recorded more than 2.2 million displaced people since the 2009 Boko Haram insurrection. It is undeniable that, in a context strongly marked by the effects of climate change, such massive displacements of people exacerbate the tensions between host communities and refugees for control of arable lands.

As conflicts are one of the major causes of hunger and food insecurity, we believe it is essential to work towards strengthening the resilience of State and regional actors to crises, specifically on the African continent. To that end, we must bolster cooperation among States with a view to improving the living conditions of the people who are in search of a better life.

Humanitarian access to populations facing hunger and food insecurity is a sacred right, non-respect of which constitutes a serious violation of international humanitarian law. The perpetrators of hindering international humanitarian assistance must therefore be identified and held accountable before international courts. All parties to a conflict must ensure respect for peoples' right to access humanitarian aid, which means opening and securing humanitarian corridors is essential for the delivery of such aid.

Finally, to be effective, emergency humanitarian relief must be coordinated between the structures involved in humanitarian operations, in addition to being associated with long-term development goals in order to address structural development challenges, such as youth employment and social cohesion.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and for the briefings by Mr. Mark Lowcock and Mr. David Beasley, as well as the concept note prepared for this occasion. We especially want to welcome the presence of Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands.

Peru notes with deep concern the increase in humanitarian crises throughout the world and in famine, which threatens millions of people in conflict-affected countries, such as Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as in the Sahel and parts of Syria. Clearly, today's conflicts, which are taking place in a globalized and interdependent world, have increasingly devastating and complex humanitarian consequences and are a major cause of the alarming increase in famines. It is also clear that famines and situations of extreme poverty and neglect by institutions in general may become root causes of conflicts. They generate conditions conducive to violent extremism and terrorism, as well as to the recruitment of young people and children by armed groups.

The vicious cycle of poverty and hunger, violence and conflict is reflected in dramatic increases in human vulnerability. Children are especially vulnerable to the impact of malnutrition. Women are exposed to sexual blackmail for food, among other abuses. Displaced persons and refugees generate additional challenges.

The theses of Amartya Sen and other social scientists indicate that good governance and accountability could prevent famines. That perspective is also consistent with the concept of sustainable peace, which aims to build inclusive institutions in order to prevent conflicts and address their root causes. In that vein, we believe that the promotion of labour-intensive agricultural development is key, especially in rural areas, to ensure food security and prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflicts.

We highlight the need for more consistent and coordinated action by the United Nations system, in particular with regard to its humanitarian assistance operations, support for sustainable development and peacekeeping on the ground. As far as possible, food assistance must rely on locally produced foods.

In accordance with international humanitarian law, the Security Council has the responsibility of ensuring sustained, safe, rapid and unhindered access to assistance in areas affected by conflicts and famines. That includes essential imports and the protection of the civil infrastructure needed for their distribution.

In addition to promoting political solutions to conflicts, the Council must respond firmly to violations of international humanitarian law involving obstacles to access to humanitarian assistance and to the atrocious crime of using hunger as a weapon of war. To that end, the Secretariat should inform the Council in a systematic and timely way about the risks of famine associated with conflicts and about any obstacles to access to humanitarian assistance and identify those responsible. That should trigger specific sanctions, including criminal punishment, within the framework of due process. We also believe that food should be distributed by women in order to prevent cases of sexual blackmail and other abuses.

We wish to conclude by welcoming international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and indicate the urgency of immediately disbursing the promised funds. We also want to highlight the professionalism and commitment of the humanitarian workers of the United Nations system and other agencies.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are happy to see you, Madam President, presiding over this briefing. I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and David Beasley of the World Food Programme for sharing their views on the link between conflict and hunger and their experience in the field. We want to express appreciation to both for the very good work they and their respective institutions and programmes have been doing.

We recognize that slow and sudden-onset disasters, including the impact of climate change, continue to be one of the major triggers of food insecurity and hunger in different parts of the world. As recognized in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, disaster-induced food insecurity and hunger have an impact on the overall development of a country and require a development-oriented solution supported by enhanced international cooperation. In our view, these issues should continue to be considered within their primary forums, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council.

Unresolved conflicts and certain measures taken by parties to an armed conflict also continue to exacerbate hunger and food insecurity in different parts of the world. Lack of progress in resolving some pressing conflict situations have also led to serious humanitarian crises, including hunger and chronic food insecurity. We are of the view that the focus of the Council, including today's briefing and possible follow-up, should be limited to conflict-exacerbated hunger and food insecurity. In that regard, we would like to underline the following five points.

First, preventing conflict-exacerbated food insecurity and hunger in different parts of the world requires addressing the root causes of conflicts and finding durable solutions aimed at preventing further relapses. It is important for the Council to use all available tools at its disposal, including through enhanced engagement with regional and subregional organizations, with a view to preventing and addressing the root causes of conflicts in different parts of the world. In that regard, of course, nothing meaningful can be done without some level of unity within the Council. That might seem trivial because of repetition, but it is a fact that cannot be denied.

Secondly, pending durable solutions for the root causes of conflicts, the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance to civilians remains critical. While recognizing the minimal role of development actors and development-oriented solutions in conflict situations, humanitarian actors indeed play a significant role in responding to food insecurity in complex

situations. However, securing humanitarian access has become a major challenge and has been one of the issues that we keep on discussing in the consideration of various conflict situations. In some situations, the Council has been trying to facilitate humanitarian access. In that regard, one cannot deny that political differences have proved to be major obstacles, while highlighting again the need to prioritize the unity of the Council. How we can prioritize addressing humanitarian tragedies, hunger and famine in the face of deep political differences is the major challenge the world faces today and that appears to be extremely self-evident.

Thirdly, peacekeeping missions continue to play a significant role in the safe provision of humanitarian assistance and facilitating humanitarian access. It is also important to note that a lack of or limited resources have, over the years, impacted the role of peacekeeping missions to that end, thereby limiting their contribution to efforts aimed at the prevention of conflict-induced food insecurity and hunger. In our view, that requires further consideration by the Council.

Fourthly, the Security Council could use some of the subsidiary bodies, such as the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict or mandated sanctions committees, to reduce and prevent conflict-induced human suffering, starvation, hunger or food insecurity.

In conclusion, we believe that respecting the principles of complementarity among the various United Nations organs is important to ensure achieving the goals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations across the Organization's various pillars. That is why we believe there is a need for caution to avoid overstretching the discussion and for limiting its scope to conflict-exacerbated hunger and food insecurity. Given that, using hunger as a weapon of war is a gross violation of international law, which should be vehemently condemned.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome today's presence of Her Excellency Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands. Likewise, we express our gratitude for the briefings by Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and by Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme, to whom we would like to take this opportunity to express our unwavering support for the important work that they do.

Food insecurity and the risk of famine in the world are undoubtedly a problem that must concern us all and include the involvement and joint action of the entire international community so that they may be prevented and mitigated through cross-cutting and comprehensive measures, especially now, as we are on the path to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, the predicament created by famine is more worrisome when one of its causes and a main factor of its persistence are the direct result of armed conflicts and man-made violence. A tragic example of the latter are the 74 million people at risk of acute food insecurity who live in conflict areas, primarily in Africa and the Middle East. Unfortunately, other victims who, upon escaping violent situations, have abandoned their homes and means of subsistence are dramatically adding to the already alarming number of forcibly displaced persons and account for more than 65 million people throughout the world, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

On the one hand, the constant flow of displaced persons and refugees has undeniably resulted in the stoppage of agricultural activities and the breakdown of production cycles, as well as the loss of land and livestock, thereby affecting the sustainable supply of basic foodstuffs. While, on the other hand, it has had a severe impact upon communities and States that receive those refugees and displaced persons, as they try the latters' ability ensure their subsistence and provide them with sufficient food. In some instances, that fragile situation is further worsened owing to the fact that, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, actors involved in and parties to conflicts impose arbitrary restrictions on access roads, ports and airports by which imported food and basic humanitarian assistance arrives to meet the needs of the people, as well as target humanitarian assistance as military objectives — a practice that we condemn in the strongest of terms. Armed conflicts are also responsible for explosive remnants of war contaminating vast tracks of land that could otherwise be used for agriculture.

It is important to consider that the high humanitarian cost that conflicts entail goes hand-in-had with policies aimed at waging war and the excessive military expenses that they entail, and that they regrettably perpetuate a cycle of poverty directly affecting the people. It is clear

that the presence of famine in conflict areas is not owing to a lack of resources for obtaining food, but to the lack of parties' political will to resolve their differences. In that regard, my delegation calls on the Security Council and the membership of the Organization, in general, to maintain a united and firm stand in condemning acts and campaigns of violence and belligerence that worsen current conflicts and create harmful instability posing a threat to the lives of millions of innocent people.

As Executive Director Beasley stated earlier, Bolivia believes unequivocally that the best way to avoid and stop the perpetuation of the vicious cycle of war, conflict, famine and humanitarian catastrophes lies essentially in prevention. The effective application of mediation, negotiation, prevention and conciliation for the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the pre-eminent use of the provisions set forth in Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, are indispensable to advance analysis and comprehensive debate on conflicts, their root causes and their possible consequences. Clearly, prevention must be considered as an asset at the service of the people to strengthen, and not to weaken or diminish, States. Accordingly, we believe that the use of reports and briefings on food insecurity and hunger that include status reports on conflict areas, such as the *Global Report on Food Crises*, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, and the European Commission report on the same subject presented yesterday, are useful tools for prevention and providing early warning of potential situations whereby crises might worsen. It is also important that, within the framework of their respective mandates, specific United Nations bodies work in coordination with the various agencies and programmes responsible for monitoring levels of food supplies, particularly in conflict areas, so that strengthening humanitarian assistance can be planned for in a cross-cutting manner and efforts to ensure post-conflict resilience are supported.

Lastly, we highlight the content of presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, of August 2017, which reiterates that reports the Secretary General can provide on humanitarian situations and responses, in particular the risk of famine in areas affected by conflicts, are extremely important in designing and implementing prevention mechanisms.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): As we heard this morning, the number of women, men and children in our world who are suffering from food insecurity is increasing. At the same time, more and more people are living in areas torn apart by war and conflict. This we see every day in the Security Council. As this year's *Global Report on Food Crises* sets out, those are not separate trends. The links between conflict and hunger are clear and undeniable. Over the past year, in the 18 countries where 74 million, or 60 per cent, of those in acute need live, conflict and insecurity were the main driver of food insecurity. Conflict often also prevents humanitarian access. At the same time, food insecurity can trigger conflict, thereby creating a vicious cycle. As we heard this morning from Mr. Lowcock, hunger today is used as a weapon of war.

Let me therefore begin by thanking the Dutch presidency, and you, Madam, for organizing today's meeting on this important issue, which we cannot ignore if we are to meet our responsibilities to maintain international peace and security. Let me also thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Executive Director Beasley for their candid and forthright briefings today. They have clearly outlined the challenges that they and their partners face on a daily basis as they seek to meet the needs of people who are trapped by mutually reinforcing conflict and hunger across the world. They also pointed out opportunities represented by the Council effectively shouldering its responsibilities.

Last year, the Secretary-General came to us and warned that 20 million people were at risk of famine. In response, the Council heeded his early warning and took early action to avoid disaster. Working together, the international community managed to avert famine, and we demonstrated the important role that the Council has to play. However, as I said yesterday during the briefing on the Lake Chad basin (see S/PV.8212), our actions have addressed only the acute symptoms of such crises. The situation for millions of people around the world remains perilous. In South Sudan, for example, the protracted conflict has led to a shocking rise in hunger. While outright famine might have been averted, many individuals are suffering from famine-like conditions. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, with women often being the first to sacrifice their food consumption for others in the family. Continued fighting and displacement have disrupted planting and harvesting, which means that next year there will be less food once again, thereby making it still more unaffordable.

Food insecurity is being exacerbated by economic collapse. Seven million people are now in need of humanitarian assistance. Even when food is available and humanitarians are ready to respond, assistance to people in need is impeded and denied due to access restrictions. The vicious cycle is now all too familiar and all too common. In Somalia, violence and conflict, combined with severe droughts, continue to cause mass displacement. The denial of access is hindering an effective response aimed at reaching 6.2 million people. In Yemen, the disrupted and restricted delivery of humanitarian assistance is affecting the 22.2 million Yemenis desperately in need of humanitarian aid. More decisive and long-term action is clearly needed. How should the Council respond?

First, the role of the Council is to maintain international peace and security, which entails preventing conflicts, effectively working for their cessation and contributing to sustaining peace. The prevention of conflict requires a proactive approach to addressing the deeper, underlying risks that prevent sustainable development and peace. In order to efficiently address the root causes and complex drivers of conflict, such as those discussed today, we must better understand the risks. Regular reporting on food insecurity and early warning indications from agencies, such as the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, serve to highlight the link between conflict and food insecurity. The Council can then take greater proactive action to prevent human suffering.

Secondly, the Council also has an important role to play in upholding and ensuring respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. That includes calling on parties to armed conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian objects, including objects necessary for food production and distribution, and firmly condemning them when such basic norms are not respected. Parties must refrain from attacking or rendering useless objects such as foodstuffs, agriculture areas, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies.

Another fundamental element of ensuring respect for international law includes ensuring rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need of such assistance. Arbitrarily denying humanitarian access to people in need is a violation of international humanitarian law. Starvation as a method of warfare is outlawed and unacceptable. As we have heard today from previous speakers, accountability for violations of those fundamental norms is critical. The Council must play its full role in ensuring that its demands are adhered to.

Adequate and flexible funding is also essential for an effective and swift humanitarian response. Sweden is a long-standing donor to the Central Emergency Response Fund and all United Nations humanitarian appeals. We call on others to contribute in order to ensure that sufficient funding is available for time-critical assistance and protection for civilians in need. However, humanitarian assistance should only be a short-term solution to the immediate crisis. To break the vicious cycle of hunger and conflict, we must invest in building sustainable peace, allowing farmers to return to their lands to rebuild their livelihoods and for sustainable, resilient and inclusive food systems to re-emerge.

In conclusion, the duty the Secretary-General entrusted to the Council last year is far from completed. In the presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14) adopted in August last year, facilitated by Sweden, the Council committed to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to end conflicts and to take action to avert famine in conflict-affected countries. We look forward to continued updates from the Secretary-General on the matter. The Council must remain seized of the issuse and consider further action.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Today our briefers have sounded the alarm and warned us of the surging levels of acute hunger, which are largely attributable to conflict. But that is not for the first time. More than a year ago, the Secretary-General drew the Council's attention to the change in the long-term trend in global hunger: it was then rising for the first time in a decade. He stated that the situation was critical. The United Nations predicted four simultaneous famines, threatening the lives of 20 million people. Through the generosity of donors and the actions of humanitarian and development organizations, international financial institutions and regional Governments, famine itself was prevented or, at least, contained.

But let us be clear. Over the past year, suffering and hunger have increased. In the world today, one out of every nine people is undernourished. That is a total of 815 million people — an increase of 38 million in the past year. Conflict is the main reason for that increase in hunger. Sixty per cent of hungry and malnourished

people live in countries affected by conflict. Almost 75 per cent of the world's 155 million stunted children under the age of five live in countries affected by conflict. It is the most vulnerable, in particular women and children, who are most affected by hunger. Those statistics indicate that the actions we have taken in the past year to reduce hunger have not been enough. As so clearly stated by our briefers, we must examine and address the root causes of the severe hunger crisis if we hope to put an end to it.

Last August, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14) that for the first time acknowledged that hunger and conflict are linked. That was a step forward, but it provides us with only half the picture. In the statement the Security Council emphasized:

> "with deep concern that ongoing conflicts and violence have devastating humanitarian consequences and hinder an effective humanitarian response in the short, medium and long term and are therefore a major cause of famine".

It reads as if hunger is just an inevitable consequence of war or a by-product of the changing nature of conflict, but that is clearly not the case. Hunger does not need to be a product of war. I hope we can make that clear in future Council products. We must understand and acknowledge the true nature of the problem in order to take the necessary collective actions to break the deadly link between conflict and hunger. In that regard, we see three key areas of responsibility for the Council.

First, we must redouble efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and build and sustain peace. Secondly, we must uphold international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We are quickly approaching a new normal where warring parties believe it is acceptable to destroy crops, interrupt markets and attack water points, hospitals and schools. Too often, there is a lack of accountability for State actors and other parties to conflict who are responsible for increasing hunger. Thirdly, we must actively safeguard humanitarian access. In almost all of the crises before the Council, people are denied or are unable to access essential aid, often with the most vulnerable people being the worst affected. The Security Council can, and must, play a key role to enable the safe, unhindered and rapid access of populations to humanitarian assistance. We must engage with national and regional authorities to apply diplomatic pressure and insist on the removal of access constraints. We must also pursue accountability for any violations.

We must think creatively when responding to the crisis. For example, to identify the most serious cases of obstructed access objectively, we could use a model that articulates access in terms of needs met by the delivery of health-care protection and education, rather than simply by the number of aid convoys. We could also include the denial of access in the design of sanctions mandated by the Council more routinely.

We are extremely grateful to you, Madam President, and to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's meeting, because it is a subject about which the United Kingdom — the third-largest humanitarian donor — cares deeply and in which it is deeply engaged. The scale of the challenge we face is clear. The threat of famine remains. In a world of abundance, 815 million people are still hungry. Their hunger is used as a weapon of war. We must act and use the tools at our disposal to show the world that it is not acceptable and that we around this table do not accept it. We must seek accountability and make the consequences of those appalling actions clear.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank you, Madam President, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's meeting, and we congratulate you on your presidency. We also thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings and for the tireless efforts of their agencies to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly given the increasing number of violent conflicts around the world over the past 10 years. That has been evident in the countries that are facing food insecurity. The data show that in 2017, 124 million in 51 countries were affected by acute food insecurity. According to the *Global Report on Food Crises 2018*, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, that is an increase of 11 million people as compared to the previous year.

More than a year ago, on 21 February 2017, the Secretary-General sent a letter to Member States in which he highlighted the world food crisis and the risk of famine in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. He also warned that if decisive action was not taken, more than 20 million people in

those countries would face the risk of famine within six months. The Security Council therefore began paying more attention to the risk of famine in many countries on its agenda. On 9 August 2017, the Security Council issued presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, in which it expressed its grave concern about the risk of famine and called on Member States to provide resources and funding to prevent that possibility. The international community responded rapidly to the Secretary-General's appeal, donating approximately 70 per cent of the required funds by October 2017, when the Secretary-General reviewed the most recent developments related to the risk of famine and a world food crisis in the Security Council (see S/PV.8069). The State of Kuwait also responded by donating $15 million towards addressing the food insecurity crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. In our deliberations today, I would like to underscore three of the main elements in the link between hunger and conflict — prevention, compliance and urgent action.

First, on prevention, we believe that the aspect of morality should be paramount in addressing food insecurity. There can be no moral justification for allowing people or groups to die of hunger. The early warning from the Secretary-General is part of the interaction between the Security Council and the Secretary-General and helps us to guard against the advent of serious humanitarian crises, especially those driven by conflict. We should take into account the fact that the effective and speedy implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals will help to prevent future conflicts resulting from hunger. We should also focus on addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, climate change and inequality. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that one of the first of the Sustainable Development Goals is eradicating hunger, which is achievable given the abundant resources in the world today.

Secondly, with regard to compliance, respect for international law is crucial to breaking the link between conflict and hunger. We should ensure respect for international humanitarian law in situations of conflict. The Security Council has a number of measures at its disposal to ensure such respect when Member States fail to fulfil their obligations, such as encouraging parties to a conflict to comply with international law and the relevant resolutions, including civilian protection mandates in peacekeeping operations and establishing impartial investigations and accountability mechanisms. Where there are violations and disregard for such international norms, hunger and poverty increase people's need for humanitarian assistance. When peace prevails, there is less need for humanitarian assistance. Conflicts are man-made and are a driver of misery. Political settlements, preventive diplomacy and addressing the root causes are therefore the best solutions.

Despite our collective efforts to prevent famine in many countries, the food-insecurity crisis continues. Many people throughout the world, particularly women and children, are unable to meet their basic needs. The risk of famine has highlighted the need for better coordination and increased early-warning mechanisms. The State of Kuwait stands ready to work with other Member States in actively contributing to international efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution to the problem of conflict-related hunger around the world.

Mr. Kononuchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to welcome you, Madam President, to today's meeting of the Security Council. We thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings assessing the issue of food security in countries in situations of conflict. We have also taken note of the reports published by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on this topic following presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14, issued by the Security Council in August last year.

As those reports rightly note, armed conflicts are by no means the only reason for the increasing numbers of hungry people in the world, although they undoubtedly have a negative impact on the ability to ensure food security for needy populations. However, we see a clear desire on the part of some countries to entrench and promote the link between conflict and hunger both in the work of the Security Council and more generally. We feel that is problematic chiefly because in practice it effectively pushes the key drivers of food insecurity — volatile world food prices, global economic stagnation, unequal access to agricultural and agro-industrial technology, lack of investment, weak progress in the areas of sustainable consumption and production, unfavourable weather conditions and others — into the background. There

is no justification for ignoring such factors, especially their underlying causes.

In response to that, it is argued that a focus on conflict favours strict compliance with the Security Council's mandate. If our colleagues are indeed guided by that objective, we can only welcome such efforts, since we ourselves consistently object to overburdening the Security Council's agenda with issues beyond its purview. However, we have participated in a series of discussions on the links between hunger and conflict, and having studied the arguments for possible response measures on the part of the Council, we have concluded that considering this issue generally cannot be productive. Each conflict has its own specific characteristics, participants, reality and plans for a resolution. It is hardly likely that we in the Security Council will be able to come up with some universal formula — a panacea, if you like — for solving the problem of food security in such circumstances. We have not heard any groundbreaking ideas in that regard so far. Basically, all the proposals boil down to affirming and reaffirming the principles of international humanitarian law, but that work is already being done in the framework of country-specific topics. Where is the added value in this case?

In that connection, we firmly maintain the position that the Security Council should consider problems of food security only in the context of specific country situations that pose a threat to international peace and security. There are qualified experts working on all of these situations who can make objective assessments of the causes underlying local threats in the area of food security support and propose various solutions, assuming any are possible. The same applies to the international legal aspects of hunger in the context of conflicts. The Security Council's responses should be planned and implemented in conjunction with the country dossiers that the Council addresses. Incidentally, all four issues that the President outlined today are being attended to within the framework of country-specific areas that are on the Council's agenda. We are ready for more active collaboration with experts from the United Nations specialized agencies within the framework of existing formats and negotiation platforms.

With regard to the humanitarian response to threats related to food security, we would like to express our gratitude to the humanitarian organizations that have been taking steps to prevent hunger in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. Unfortunately, the situation in those countries remains tense, which does not exclude the possibility that the alarming situation that arose last year will recur. We will continue to provide donor support to the efforts of the WFP, the FAO and their partner organizations. We hope that their activities will always be conducted in accordance with the humanitarian principles defined in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

We believe that as a rule, freely interpreting those principles and exploiting the humanitarian agenda for short-term military and political purposes in practice lead only to increasingly confrontational rhetoric, politicization and thereby to aggravating the suffering of the millions of people who have become victims of protracted military conflicts — and the famous "fighters for justice and democracy" have played a not insignificant role in fuelling those conflicts. It is worth adding something about the consequences of the unilateral sanctions and economic blockade policies of certain countries, including self-styled humanitarian rights champions. All of us, including humanitarian agency personnel, are familiar with the negative effects that such irresponsible measures can have for entirely innocent populations, to the discredit of the initiators of such steps. We hope that these factors that are aggravating the humanitarian situation will receive as much attention as all the others in our public work.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are pleased to see you here in the Chamber again, Madam President, and we would like to thank the Netherlands for convening today's meeting on such an important subject. I would also like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their thorough briefings on the relationship between conflict and hunger around the world, as well as the ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering that those two terrible problems inflict on their victims.

Armed conflicts are one of the main obstacles to the realization of the right to adequate nourishment in many parts of the world, since they often interrupt the various stages of the production, harvesting and distribution of food. In Africa, where the livelihoods of 60 per cent of the population depend on agriculture, conflicts can have a disastrous effect on their countries' economies and plans for sustainable development. Equatorial Guinea is deeply concerned about the increasing exploitation of hunger in armed conflict.

It is a deplorable fact that in the twenty-first century, 11 per cent of the world's population — 815 million people — are suffering from hunger or starvation, and that more than half of those people — 489 million — are living in situations of armed conflict. And of all them, 243 million are African and represent 20 per cent of the continent's total population.

Through the implementation of our Horizon 2020 national plan, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, my Government is continuing to work to achieve the total eradication of hunger in Equatorial Guinea and Africa as a whole. Our brother countries are making similar efforts. However, one of the challenges in our subregion is in helping to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflicts in two of those brother countries, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where some 7 million people are affected, many of them displaced and exposed to hunger. That situation is complicated by the porous borders between our countries and the presence of terrorist organizations and armed rebel groups that exploit this vulnerability for illegal purposes.

Despite the progress that African countries have made to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and preserve peace, there are 215 million hungry people in Africa, where eight of the 15 United Nations peacekeeping missions are also located. Although there are fewer conflicts between countries globally, the numbers of internal conflicts are growing and are exacerbated by the presence and intervention of terrorist and extremist groups. Exploiting hunger and access to food and humanitarian aid as weapons of war in these situations is deplorable and Equatorial Guinea vehemently condemns such practices.

While conflicts are determining factors in 10 of the 13 worst food security crises in the world, they are not necessarily the cause of such crises, or the only one. Conflicts themselves also result from poverty and a lack of access to basic needs such as food, from the lack of opportunities that enable countries to achieve equitable economic growth and sustainable development in areas such as the industrialization of the agricultural sector, which supports two thirds of Africa's population, a lack of access to markets, and abnormal climatic events such as El Niño. For those reasons, Equatorial Guinea encourages the international community to consolidate its efforts to ensure the sustainable financing of the zero-hunger Sustainable Development Goal, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme and the African Union's 2014 Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea welcomes the recent plans to strengthen the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations to end hunger in Africa by 2025. We also note that Equatorial Guinea and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations have established the Africa Solidarity Trust Fund, which has been fully funded to the tune of $30 million.

Equatorial Guinea commends the courageous work of humanitarian personnel and condemns all attacks on them as well as violations of international humanitarian law with regard to the protection of civilians. We believe that in order to ensure the protection during conflicts of the most vulnerable civilians, such as women, children and people with disabilities, and of humanitarian personnel, the Security Council, while always respecting States' sovereignty, should redouble its efforts to find ways to resolve conflicts through dialogue and uphold international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, Equatorial Guinea endorses the recommendations of the 9 August 2017 presidential statement on this topic (S/PRST/2017/14). We encourage the various United Nations agencies, especially those dedicated to humanitarian work and development cooperation in order to help prevent conflict and maintain peace following conflict, to work more closely with one another and with regional and subregional organizations, as well as with States, to find sustainable solutions.

We call on international public opinion and the private, business and academic sectors to continue to seek solutions to food waste. The 2015 United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization report entitled *The State of Food Insecurity in the World* noted that a 25 per cent reduction in food waste in developed nations would cover the needs of the 870 million people worldwide who suffer from hunger. Let us get to work.

Ms. Eckels-Currie (United States of America): I would like to thank you, Minister Kaag, for joining us today and for convening this important meeting. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and Executive Director Beasley for their always cogent and pointed presentations. We appreciate their ongoing contributions to the work of the Security Council.

The connection between hunger and armed conflict is undeniable. The majority of the world's hungry people today live in conflict-affected States, and that number is growing. That means people are starving not because of a drought or a natural disaster, but because conflicts are preventing food from getting to those who desperately need it. This is a man-made food security crisis.

Hunger and war zones quickly turns into a vicious cycle. Relentless violence, which defines far too many conflicts today, drives countless civilians from their homes, fields and livelihoods. Fighters prevent food from getting to those in need or destroy the markets and the infrastructure needed to distribute food. This wave of hunger forces more people to flee their homes, who often cross borders in search of ways to feed their loved ones. Or they take up arms to fight back against the forces that are starving them. Fighting gets worse and then still more people go hungry. Therefore, conflict causes hunger and hunger leads to more conflict. This cycle is devastating, but because hunger and conflict is a man-made crisis, we have the power to solve it. We on the Security Council, together with all responsible Members of the United Nations, can act to keep civilians from starving. At an absolute minimum, we must demand an end to medieval and barbaric siege tactics, arbitrary denials of humanitarian access and attacks that violate international law, humanitarian law and human rights law. The connection between these violations and threats to international peace and security is also undeniable, and an equally appropriate topic for the Council.

In South Sudan, the situation became so extreme last year that famine was declared in certain parts of the country. The Government of South Sudan and other armed groups blocked the World Food Programme and other humanitarian agencies from reaching civilians with life-saving aid. For years, fighters from all sides slaughtered and plundered livestock, and they have assaulted and murdered women and children who leave internally displaced persons camps to search for food. Civilians who fear for their lives have chosen to stay hidden in marshes, eating nothing but plants in order to avoid being killed by armed groups. Although we narrowly managed to avert famine last year in South Sudan, the forecast for the year ahead has only worsened. The threat of famine will remain as long as the parties continue paying no regard to the basic welfare or basic human rights of the South Sudanese people.

In Syria, the Al-Assad regime and its backers have relentlessly used sieges and starvation to pummel the civilian population in opposition areas. For years, the regime has denied even the most basic deliveries of food aid to hundreds of thousands of civilians in besieged areas, including right now, in blatant defiance of conflict resolution 2401 (2018). The Council has spoken at length about the Al-Assad regime's actions in Syria, and we will not repeat all the details here. But as we saw in eastern Ghouta, despite the Council's demand for a ceasefire, the regime decided to cut off deliveries of food and medicine and unleash an all-out assault on the nearly 400,000 people living there. Denying the people of eastern Ghouta food was a key part of the Al-Assad regime strategy. This is a barbaric tactic that any responsible member of the Council must stand up and condemn. We will not stop working to hold Al-Assad and his backers accountable for trying to starve the Syrian people into submission.

Yemen has become the world's largest food security emergency by number of people in need. Again, the link between conflict and hunger is obvious. Fighting has decimated Yemen's economy, which means Yemen cannot import enough food for the country's people. Yemen is 90 per cent dependent on imports for food, so the disruption caused war, quickly leading to a devastating hunger crisis.

There is no question that all parties must allow unhindered humanitarian access to help alleviate those needs. But for Yemen, humanitarian aid is not enough. Agencies like the World Food Programme cannot tackle hunger in Yemen on their own. We also need to protect the support and flow of life-saving commercial imports of food. If we improve humanitarian access and facilitate imports, we can start to address Yemen's dire needs. That is why the United States supported the delivery of mobile cranes to Al-Hudaydah port, and why we continue to promote the work of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen. The United States welcomes Saudi Arabia's recent commitments to expand the delivery of humanitarian and commercial goods. We look forward to the plans for their development with humanitarian partners and encourage a rapid expansion of access.

Hunger and conflict are also linked in the Lake Chad basin. The terror of Boko Haram and the West African affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) has devastated communities throughout the region. Their continued terror prolongs the

humanitarian crisis and displacement of millions who face food insecurity and the very real threat of famine. The United States continues to work closely with Nigeria and its neighbours to defeat Boko Haram and ISIS in West Africa once and for all. But we need to make sure that the fight does not exacerbate food insecurity for civilians. That is why we urge Nigeria and the other Governments of the Lake Chad basin to step up their cooperation with humanitarian agencies.

A successful response to the crisis depends on access to the communities in need throughout the entire region. We reiterate calls on Governments of the region to do all they can to help secure and maintain that access. They can also do more to bolster grass-roots support for the international humanitarian response by reinstating legitimate Governments across the region and reassuring the region's people that they have a just and secure future in their home communities. To echo our Ethiopian friends, that means the Council needs to take a more serious approach to conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy rather than waiting to act until a situation reaches a full-blown emergency.

When conflict is the common denominator for so many places that are food insecure, this issue must be on the Council's agenda. The specifics of each conflict may be different, but we must acknowledge how often the denial or violation of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms are at the root of these conflicts. If the Security Council is to live up to its mandate, we must be consistent, principled and strong in demanding that conflict should be no excuse for perpetuating hunger, and the prevention of such conflicts should be our highest goal.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, the delegation of Kazakhstan would like to express appreciation to the Kingdom of the Netherlands for convening today's briefing. We are particularly pleased to see you, Minister Kaag, presiding over today's meeting. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. David Beasley, for their very insightful briefings on the stark and painful reality of the suffering caused by conflict and hunger.

The statistics we are hearing today are shocking and should awaken our conscience, because what we witness today is the worst food security crisis since the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations. After a prolonged decline, world hunger appears to be on the rise again, leading to the re-emergence of famine. According to the latest edition of the *Global Report on Food Crises*, published yesterday, the vast majority of the chronically food insecure and malnourished live in countries affected by conflicts. The 11 per cent increase in the number of food-insecure people in 2017 is largely attributable to new or newly intensified conflicts combined with droughts and floods. Ongoing armed conflict and violence impede livelihoods and access to markets and create widespread displacement, which is further aggravated by climate change. Moreover, it is obvious that unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, the unsustainable use of land and water and the exploitation of natural resources further escalate the potential of widespread food insecurity. While we express grave concern, we need to go beyond expressions of solidarity and immediately address the problem with the following workable strategies.

First, it is clear that the response to food insecurity and hunger requires strengthened connections between political solutions and long-term development strategies. We need to strengthen the security/development nexus through implementation of development programmes in conflict areas, including making major investments in rural development and agriculture, natural-resources management and social protection.

Secondly, we must strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention and resolve situations of conflict, including through the implementation of the proposals set out in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (S/2018/43). Instead of having to respond to crises, we need to greatly increase our investments in prevention. The Security Council underlined the importance of that principle by adopting, last August, a presidential statement that reiterates the Council's commitment to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to end conflicts, including through addressing their underlying root causes in an inclusive and sustainable manner (S/PRST/2017/14).

Thirdly, it is of vital importance that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat alert the Security Council on worrying levels of food insecurity and hunger, including through existing reporting mechanisms. Because of the Secretary-General's early warning in February 2017 and a swift humanitarian response,

famine was averted in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and the north-east of Nigeria.

Fourthly, we must enhance coordination both within the United Nations and with regional and subregional organizations and financial organizations, in order to address immediate needs, the recovery stage, long-term development and sustaining peace in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. All those institutions have different tools and expertise that should be used in a complementary way to achieve desired outcomes.

Fifthly, we need not only to respect, but also ensure respect for, international humanitarian law by providing full, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access. This is a process to be engaged in by the entire United Nations system, in particular its peacekeeping missions and country teams, working with both Governments and armed groups. We should also seek the support of neighbouring countries with influence for their timely interventions, along with donors, partners and, most of all, civil society and local populations.

Last but not least, we cannot tolerate or consider the food-insecurity and hunger situation with an attitude of business as usual. Urgent collective efforts are needed if the international community wants to achieve the ambitious goal of a world without hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes you to New York, Madam President, to preside over today's open meeting. I thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. Beasley, for their briefings.

For some time now, some African and West Asian countries and regions have seen droughts and the effects of climate change, among other challenges, and have suffered from severe famine. Helping the countries concerned to cope with famine and settle the issue will help eliminate the root causes of war and conflict. The United Nations, the World Food Programme and other relevant agencies have made great efforts to alleviate disasters, which China greatly appreciates. The international community should continue to provide help to the countries and regions concerned.

First, it is necessary to promote inclusive and balanced development that benefits all. Development is a top priority and the fundamental policy objective if various global issues are to be resolved. The United Nations system must play a coordinating role to promote the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, give priority to the elimination of poverty and hunger and continue to increase input into the development of developing countries. The principles of extensive consultation, joint contributions and shared benefits should be adopted in global governance to guide the globalization of the economy towards healthy development, properly respond to climate change issues and actively help developing countries to enhance their capacity for independent development with a view to achieving development.

Secondly, efforts should be stepped up for the resolution of regional hotspot issues to help the regions in conflict realize peace and stability at an early date and embark on the road to sustainable development. The Security Council and the international community should have a greater sense of urgency in finding political solutions to relevant hotspot issues, act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, assist countries in conflict in advancing the peace process and national reconciliation and in resolving their disputes through such peaceful means as dialogue and consultation, with a view to building together a world of lasting peace and universal security for all to share and to create a good environment for common development.

Thirdly, all United Nations organs should perform their respective functions and observe the division of labour while strengthening cooperation. The Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security issues, should focus its efforts on helping relevant countries and regions to respond to peace and security issues, while the World Food Programme and the United Nations humanitarian agencies should respond to the needs of Member States in a timely manner and actively carry out food aid and other humanitarian relief activities. The strengths of and the roles played by regional and subregional organizations should be fully tapped to foster synergy in the international community to resolve the problem of famine.

China remains committed to the resolution of disputes to dialogue and consultation and plays a positive and constructive role in seeking political settlements for international and regional hotspot issues. In the meantime, China is actively helping other developing countries in poverty eradication and the elimination of

hunger. In 2017, China actively fulfilled its international obligations by providing non-stop multiple batches of emergency food assistance to 38 countries in Africa and Asia and to four international organizations through mulitilateral and bilateral channels. We have also carried out 158 projects of various kinds under the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization and other international organizations, effectively alleviating disaster situations in relevant countries and regions. China stands ready to continue to work with the international community to promote the building of a community of shared future for humankind and make our contributions for achieving lasting peace and common prosperity in the world.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock and Mr. David Beasley for their very comprehensive briefings. I would also like to congratulate the Netherlands, treasurer of the Group of Friends on Food and Nutrition Security, for initiating a series of discussions on conflict and hunger. We need to continue this debate and raise the interlinked issues of conflict and hunger in various relevant international forums.

I would like to quote a South African proverb: "Abundance does not spread; famine does". Indeed, we are observing a worrying trend: after declining for more than two decades, hunger is on the rise again. Moreover, estimates predict a further deterioration in food security, which is threatening the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 2, namely, to end hunger by 2030.

Africa and the Middle East are especially affected by famine. In particular, we notice that the deteriorating situation in such countries as South Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, specifically its north-eastern region, Mali, Syria and Iraq. Hunger, undernutrition and food insecurity are to a large degree the result of conflict. They are on the rise and are closely interlinked with famine and food crises. Conflict and hunger reinforce each other. The vast majority of malnourished people worldwide live in countries affected by conflict. Ten of the 13 major food crises in the world were driven by conflict. More than half of the population in conflict-affected countries live in rural areas, where livelihoods depend largely on agriculture and land and livestock are two key agricultural assets.

Hunger and undernutrition are significantly worse where conflicts are prolonged. On the other hand, food insecurity itself can trigger violence and instability, particularly in conflicts marked by inequality and fragile institutions. The link between conflict and hunger is complex and therefore requires a comprehensive response and a collaborative approach. In keeping with the Council's presidential statement issued in August 2017 (S/PRST/2017/14), Poland is strongly committed to working with the Secretary-General to pursue all possible avenues to ending conflict, including through addressing its the root causes in an inclusive and sustainable manner. We are convinced that in order for the Security Council to ensure early action, we need an early-warning information system on food insecurity and hunger and on any escalation of deepening conflicts.

This largely depends on access. Our main goal should be to protect civilians in armed conflict and ensure that their basic needs are met. This is of the utmost importance in discussing the deterioration of the situation in, for example, Syria. Access to adequate food, or the right to food, is a core human rights and binding on all States. We should promote its better implementation; in this regard, we cannot stress enough the importance of respect for international humanitarian law.

Another issue is the accountability of States or parties to armed conflict, as well as individuals, that violate international humanitarian law by using food insecurity and starvation as a method of warfare or through attacks on food-producing factories or destroying crop fields. Such violations must be investigated and the perpetrators held to account.

In conclusion, I should like once again to thank the Netherlands for having convened this meeting and to reiterate Poland's commitment to continuing to work to reduce conflict and hunger worldwide.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to thank you for having convened this meeting of the Security Council to address the link between hunger and conflict. I wish also to thank Mark Lowcock and David Beasley for their briefings.

The Secretary-General was the first to alert us, in February 2017, as to the tragic humanitarian situation of the almost 20 million people in Africa and in Yemen on the brink of famine. His observation was clear: armed conflicts are both the common denominator and the leading cause of these humanitarian disasters. In

response to that appeal, France, together with the World Bank, took an initiative last June to organize an Arria Formula meeting to address the issue. In addition to the World Bank, whose commitment is to be commended, several Member States joined us in this undertaking, which was aimed at beginning consideration of this issue by the Council. Building on these exchanges, we adopted a presidential statement last summer (S/PRST/2017/4), and then heard a briefing by the Secretary-General in October (see S/PV.8080). Six months later, it is important that we meet once again to identify concrete measures that can be envisaged by the Council.

A number of important factors have already been underscored, so I will therefore focus my statement on three points: an observation, a reminder and several avenues towards specific solutions.

First, it has been proved and documented that famine is often linked to armed conflict, which is either its leading cause or significantly aggravates it. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, Burma and north-east Nigeria are sad reflections of this link. Sixty per cent of people suffering from food insecurity worldwide live in conflict zones.

Persistent drought can play a major role. This is true in East Africa, for example, where drought has led to smaller harvests in countries affected by high levels of food insecurity. United Nations and World Food Programme reports are categorical, as our briefers have clearly and strongly reminded us. Conflicts remain the leading causes of the risk of famine, setting in motion a vicious circle: conflict increases food insecurity, which in turn fuels violence. Civilians are the main victims of this vicious circle of food insecurity and armed conflict. Often people's livelihoods are the direct targets of by violence. Civil infrastructure, aid convoys and humanitarian workers are also being targeted.

Yemen is witnessing an alarming number of obstacles to the free, prompt and ongoing access of humanitarian assistance to civilians. France recalls the need to open all ports and airports to humanitarian assistance and commercial imports so as to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people.

Hunger is not a natural disaster but the consequence of a combination of human factors. It can even be the result of a deliberate strategy, as Mark Lowcock and David Beasley underscored. Access to food is used by armed groups as a recruitment tool in areas where hunger is widespread. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recalled that in Burma, where ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority has forced more than 670,000 people to flee the country since August 2017, that phenomenon is continuing today. What is new is that it now includes deliberate starvation, deprivation of access to basic services and the destruction of means of production. We condemn these intolerable violations, which must immediately be brought to an end.

In Iraq's Nineveh governorate, one of the country's agricultural centres, Da'esh, before being driven out, destroyed more than 90 per cent of irrigation infrastructure, thereby delaying by several months or even years a solution to the food-insecurity situation. In eastern Ghouta, one of the most fertile regions of Syria, the Bashar Al-Assad regime has been using the same methods, shelling civilian infrastructure and besieging entire cities to starve the people.

Famine used as a weapon of war against civilians constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and can even constitute a war crime. Today it is more important than ever before to arrive at lasting solutions to the conflicts that lie at the heart of these humanitarian tragedies. This is our collective responsibility, which the Council must steadfastly shoulder.

Secondly, in the light of this observation, a legal reminder is necessary: namely, violations of international humanitarian law must be condemned and cannot go unpunished. It cannot be overemphasized that humanitarian access must be secure, comprehensive and unfettered. That is far from being the case everywhere. In Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria, as well as in South Sudan and Somalia, red tape and security-related obstacles prevent not only humanitarian assistance from reaching people in need but also humanitarian workers from doing their work. Humanitarian workers themselves are also being targeted.

In this context, the protection of humanitarian staff and medical professionals must be prioritized. In October 2017, the Secretary-General alerted us to an uptick in violence against humanitarian workers. In the first 10 months of 2017, humanitarian workers suffered more than 130 attacks. This is completely unacceptable. Let us not mince words: these attacks are war crimes that must not go unpunished. Medical personnel deliver assistance to the ill and wounded, at

the epicentre of conflict, at the risk of their own lives. Their commitment obliges us to act.

It is for that reason that the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, proposed last October a political declaration to protect medical personnel in conflict zones that to date has been endorsed by 13 countries; France calls upon all Member States to join this initiative. Beyond this, we wish to work to better protect humanitarian staff in this respect, as Minister Le Drian indicated yesterday during our national humanitarian conference, in which Ms. Ursula Mueller took part.

Thirdly, under those circumstances, the International Committee of the Red Cross has called for a surge of protection to improve the behaviour of the parties to conflicts, as well as people's livelihoods. Let us see what the Security Council can do to that end. In Somalia, north-east Nigeria, Sudan and Yemen, large-scale famines have been averted thanks to a prolonged humanitarian response. There are three courses of action that can be pursued.

First, we could work on improving prevention and early-warning systems to act more effectively to prevent cases of hunger. We could systematically include in our monitoring mechanisms data on alarming food insecurity levels and the restriction of humanitarian access to populations in the form of hunger indicators. Such indicators could be integrated, for example, into peacekeeping operations and country reports submitted to the Security Council.

Secondly, investments in health services and water supply could be an integral part of a strategy to eradicate hunger in conflict zones. In food and humanitarian crises, infectious diseases, such as cholera or measles, are a major cause of death as public services collapse and populations become more vulnerable to disease.

Thirdly, ending and preventing hunger in conflict zones requires a multifaceted, coordinated response and close cooperation between humanitarian relief and development efforts as part of the humanitarian-development nexus.

As the Secretary-General has said, we have a moral obligation to do better. The Security Council has the tools. France will continue to play its full part in that regard.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.